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CHARLES LEVER;

OR,

The Man of the Nineteenth Century.

BY

THE REV. W. GRESLEY, M.A.

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291.

CHARLES

God is spread through the land; the Church is putting forth her powers; education is assuming a sounder and deeper character; the press is extensively employed by the agents of good as well as by those of evil. We have much cause for hope as well as fear.

The scene will be laid in various departments of life, with a view to shew the mutual bearing of different classes on each other; how ambition and laxity of principle in the rich lead to the demoralization of the poor; how the demoralization of the poor reacts most certainly and perniciously on those above them; nay, how even good men, if unfortunately biassed in their judgment by prevailing errors, may most unconsciously promote the general evil; and lastly, how, in God's revealed religion, and in His Catholic Church, the only remedy or palliative of these evils is to be found.

Notwithstanding the objections of some much-esteemed critics to "love-scenes," I must crave permission once more to introduce what may seem to them, perhaps, to approach too much

to that character; on the plea, that in the life of the young, such as I describe, the entire omission of incidents of so much importance in fixing the character of most men's lives, would have been unnatural and unreal.

Indeed, I have a very strong opinion that the passing over such subjects, by moral writers, is one principal cause of the false feeling which has grown up amongst young persons, especially young *men*, with regard to them. The prevailing incontinence, which it is to be feared exists, may be traced quite as much to the most erroneous notion, that there is something bold and high-spirited in profligate conduct, as to the natural tendencies of youth. Let the mean, selfish, sordid character of illicit connexion be strongly painted; let the cruelty and horror with which it is often accompanied be set forth: on the other hand, let the natural beauty of honourable affection be spoken of in its proper place, accompanied, as it always is, with an admixture of romance, not as forming the main object of life, but as an "interesting episode;" — let it be

shewn that even honourable love must yield to duty;—let these things be spoken of naturally and unaffectedly, and I am persuaded that the tone of feeling, in so far as it is influenced by moral writings of a lighter nature, may be much improved; and instead of young men glorying in their shame, they may learn to think of such things more soberly and justly, and as assuredly they will view them in after life.

These topics, however, are but slightly touched on in the present story.

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CHARLES LEVER.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory. The early Prayers.

And are we then alone on holy ground,
Most gracious Father? Are we then alone,
Because the world regards not?
* * * * * *
In my heart's fear
I heard a voice, "Be still, and lowly bend:
While two or three remain, the Lord is here;
And where His presence is, His hosts attend."

The Cathedral.

MANY a long year had elapsed since I had paid a visit to my old college-friend Basil Morton, the vicar of Laxington. Living myself at a considerable distance south of the metropolis, and he far away in the northern shires, and being both of us occupied by arduous cures, our meeting had been fixed and re-fixed, and as often prevented by some unforeseen

impediment. But now the great northern railroad, which may be called the aorta, or main artery of the nation, being completed, time and space were, to a certain extent, annihilated, and the happiness of two very loving friends promoted. Accordingly, setting out early one morning, I arrived before night at my friend's house, two hundred and fifty miles distant from my own residence.

I found Morton a little the worse for years, and evidently rather careworn with the burden and responsibility of four thousand souls resting on him, but still the same cheerful companion and hearty friend as formerly. We had a thousand things to discuss; a host of old friends to talk about; many changes to deplore; others — perhaps at least equal in magnitude — to rejoice over; for we were both of sanguine temperament, and still in the full vigour of life. We had not arrived at that age which views improvements with suspicion, and is unable to enter into the restorative course upon which the Church has now set herself in earnest.

The hour of midnight had struck before our first colloquy was ended. "I fear," said I, starting from my seat, "that I am keeping you up later than your usual wont. What hour do you assemble in the morning?"

"We have prayers at half-past seven, and breakfast soon after eight."

"I will not fail to meet you," said I, as I wished my friend good night.

Next morning, at the hour mentioned, I descended from my room, and found the vicar in the front hall, with his hat on his head, his stick under his arm, and in the act of drawing on his gloves. The hall-door was open, and the fresh morning breeze poured in freely to the house; while the newly risen sun cast its cheerful light on the venerable church which stood on the other side of the well-trimmed garden and shrubbery.

"Is it not your hour for prayers?" I asked.

"Yes; will not you accompany me to church?"

"To church? most willingly; but that is a new arrangement."

"Rather, an old one revived," answered my friend.

"Well, we will talk about that afterwards: it is a *good* custom at any rate;" and forthwith I accompanied him to the church, to which the rest of his family had already gone before.

On entering the church, I was much struck with the extreme beauty and propriety of its arrangements, which I afterwards learned was chiefly owing to the taste and zeal of my friend.

Basil Morton was in truth a most zealous *church-restorer* in every sense of the word; not only of its tone and spirit, and of its forgotten or neglected usages, but of the smallest points of order or decoration. He would often use the expression of George Herbert, "There is nothing little in God's service." On first obtaining the living, he had laid out a con-

siderable sum in restoring and beautifying the church, before he had spent one shilling on his own parsonage; and, by the example of his continued liberality, had induced his parishioners to take a pride in their place of worship, and endeavour to make it more worthy of Him whose it was. Many pieces of beautiful moulding and tracery, and a handsome roof of carved oak, which the ignorance of former churchwardens had plastered up, were brought out and restored to view; several tall unsightly pews had been lowered to the height of the rest; a beautiful gothic window, of the best stained glass which could be obtained in these degenerate days, shed a calm and rich lustre from the east end; but the greatest improvement of all was the removal of a cumbrous and gaudy pulpit, which, in the days of former incumbents, had entirely obstructed the chancel. The pulpit, in a more tasteful and modest shape, was now placed against one of the side-columns of the transept, so that when you knelt to pray, the eye rested on the holy altar, simply but richly decorated, having on it, when not prepared for the communion, a rich covering of crimson velvet, a massive Bible and Prayer-Book, and the whole surmounted by a simple cross; (not a crucifix, observe, good reader: a crucifix is an image, and Basil Morton was as great a foe to Romish abuses as to Puritan slovenliness, and considered the "bowing down" to a crucifix a direct infringement of the second commandment, or certainly too much like it to be safe). One very beautiful and

reverent custom of the English Church had been revived by my friend, namely, the decoration of the altar on certain days with garlands of flowers and evergreens. This custom has in most churches become disused, except on the Feast of the Nativity; but my friend adopted it on all the principal festivals: and the pious care thus taken to adorn God's house in a worthy manner contributed, no doubt, to engender feelings of respect and holy devotion.

On the morning when I first entered the church, the congregation, though small, was more numerous than I had expected on a week-day at that early hour. There were between twenty and thirty persons, perhaps rather more. I think I never heard our beautiful Liturgy to more advantage, or felt more deeply its solemn impressiveness. It is scarcely a paradox to say, that in some churches you never hear the Liturgy at all. The clergyman may perform his part with propriety, but the congregation seem to forget when it comes to their turn to respond and join in the prayers and praises. No wonder that the service is apt to appear tedious, when it is a mere duet between the minister and the clerk. But the congregation now assembled had come really to worship, and every one took his part in the service. The psalms were chaunted by six choristers, clad in white surplices, accompanied by the soft notes of the organ, while the voices of four or five respectable-looking young men filled up the other parts of the harmony, the whole congregation adding their melody to that

of the choir. At last the blessing was pronounced, and, after a silent interval of prayer, the congregation rose to depart. As they left the church, I could not but remark the heterogeneous character of the assemblage. They seemed to consist of no one class of persons more than another, but to be taken from all ranks of life, both high and low; and such, as my friend afterwards told me, was indeed the fact. When he began the daily prayers, not more than half-a-dozen persons had attended, but they gradually increased, and were still increasing, in numbers. Sometimes a new face appeared for a few days, and then was seen no more; but, generally speaking, those who once began, continued regular in attendance. Every one of the congregation, which I had that morning seen, would be there, he assured me, the following day. And so it proved. First, there was a tall elderly gentleman, who, by his appearance, was evidently a military officer, accompanied by a young lady, the picture of elegant simplicity: these, I learned, were Sir St. Vincent Miles and his daughter, who lived at the old mansion on the opposite side of the church. He had seen much service, had passed his life in camps and courts with honour and integrity, and had now retired from the world to devote his remaining days to a closer communion with that God whom, amidst the temptations of the world, he had been never known to dishonour. There were several other persons of both sexes, evidently belonging to the upper ranks

in Laxington. There were, also, two or three who appeared to be substantial shopkeepers, but with somewhat of a more intellectual look and less portly appearance than usually belongs to their class. There were one or two young lawyers, and several clerks and apprentices. These, my friend told me, were invaluable assistants to him in his school and parish, relieving him from an immense burden in the management of his parochial societies; and, without their aid, he should never have accomplished his daily prayers, together with his full services on festivals. The rest of the congregation was composed chiefly of servants and artisans, and persons of the poorer class.

Amongst the latter there was one group which engaged my especial attention. It consisted of a young man, who supported the tottering steps of an aged woman, apparently his mother, and led her to her place with a mixture of respect and affection which much delighted me. The young man's features were intelligent and strongly marked—the sort of features which, when once seen, are not easily forgotten. Grief or passion appeared to have made deep furrows; yet was there a mild and subdued lustre in his eye, which spoke of storms subsided, and a heart at rest. In outward appearance he was decent and respectable, seeming by his dress to be a better sort of mechanic. I made particular inquiry respecting him. "That," said my friend, "is my most regular attendant at the daily prayers:

he generally brings his aged mother with him; but when she is prevented from coming by her infirmities, still he himself is always punctual. He is a man who has seen great changes in life. In early youth he had been led into deep errors, but is now, if any man ever was, *a sincere penitent*—a lost sheep brought back to the fold."

My friend gave me some further account of the young man, which so much interested me, that, during my visit at Laxington, I made acquaintance with him, and learned the history of his life from his own lips. On my return home I wrote down the particulars of his story in the following narrative, which may be described as the life of a *Man of the Nineteenth Century.*

CHAPTER II.

Church-Matters at Laxington.

Church of resigned obedience! Rome may prize
Her costlier garniture and flaunting air;
Geneva boast her undressed novelties;
Keep *thou* meek Mary's mien, divinely fair,
Thy Saviour to approach with reverent care
And lowly service—not where sounds aloud
The voice that crieth in the streets, the stare
And gaze tumultuous of the admiring crowd,—
To stand beneath the cross with holy John allow'd.

The Cathedral.

The little town of Laxington, like a good many other places in England, fell during the last century into a sort of spiritual slumber. It would take us too long to trace the causes, social and political, which led to this state of things. Certain it is, that, for some time, a partial obscuration of truth and falling-off of principle very generally prevailed amongst all classes of people in the land, laity as well as clergy.

Laxington suffered from the prevailing epidemic. No doubt there were many conscientious, well-meaning persons amongst its inhabitants, but they wanted both energy and unity of action. The church was very indifferently attended. There was no well-ordered school. The population increased considerably, but no additional place of worship was built, except a small dissenting chapel. No new clergy-

man was appointed by the government; and the people never thought of requesting the bishop to appoint one, and subscribing for his salary. The vicar, who in his best days had been a good sort of quiet man, but, like his neighbours, not very active, was in his declining age quite incompetent to perform in an efficient manner the duties of his office.

For many years this state of things continued. At last a change took place. Men's minds began to awake from their torpor. The living came into the hands of a young clergyman of very different habits from the former incumbent. Mr. Wilson, the new vicar, soon established a well-deserved reputation for diligence and zeal. His exertions were unwearied: his time was devoted to the work of the ministry. His attendance to his parishioners was most constant. A flourishing school rose up under his auspices. A Bible Society and Missionary Society were established through his exertions. The church was crowded on the Lord's day: and as to his sermons, all acknowledged them to be excellent—so searching, so subduing, so edifying, so charming. Mr. Wilson had only one great failing, and that was a grievous one, though quite unperceived by himself or his congregation, —he was *unsound in Church-principles;* rather, he entirely omitted Church-principles from his scheme of gospel-truth. He could thread the mazy path of evangelical doctrine in a sermon taken from the Epistles. He could bring the fire of prophetic de-

nunciation to bear on the sinner's heart. But he never dwelt on the other part of the divine system,—the efficacy of the sacraments—the scriptural doctrine of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and the duties and privileges of its members, which are so simply detailed in the Acts of the Apostles, and illustrated throughout the Epistles. The Bible, and the Bible alone (as he would often state), was the religion of Protestants. But he never considered, —what one would think was too evident to escape observation, — that many sects of Protestants, taking, as they suppose, the Bible for their guide, but *mistaking their own private opinion for the meaning of the Bible*, have fallen into worse errors than the Romanists, even "denying the Lord who bought them." Mr. Wilson's grand fault was, that he knew nothing of the Church as "the pillar and ground of the truth."[1] God, in His great mercy, has given us both the Bible and the Church; and so long as we keep to both we are safe. But if, like the Romanist, we hear the Church without hearing or reading the Bible; or, like the ultra-Protestant, reject the teaching of the Church, and interpret the Bible according to our own fancy, we are sure to fall into grievous errors. *We should always remember, that "the word of God is truth;" and that the Church is the "pillar" on which that truth is, as it were, inscribed and upheld before the people.*

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 15.

Perhaps some of my readers will say, If Mr Wilson was so successful as you have described him, in his ministry, and his preaching so well attended, surely his deficiency in Church-principles was of little moment.

But mark the sequel.

In due course of time, it came to pass, that Mr. Wilson was removed to a more important sphere of duty. His power of preaching, and the views which he adopted, pointed him out to certain patrons of Church-livings as a fit person to fill an important pulpit in one of the great commercial towns; and he was accordingly promoted.

The day at last arrived when he was to preach his farewell sermon. The church was crowded to suffocation. The greatest expectation was excited. Mr. Wilson took for his text the words of St. Paul, "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God."[2]

Alas! these were becoming words in the mouth of "such an one as Paul the aged;" but if there had been a humble Churchman in that congregation, he might well have feared for a young clergyman of twenty-seven years old applying to himself the language of the inspired apostle, a bishop of the Church, when addressing the priests whom he had ordained with his own hands. However, Mr. Wilson was quite unconscious of any impropriety. He gave

[2] Acts xx. 27.

an able and eloquent summary of what *he* thought to be the evangelical scheme; setting forth the corruption of human nature, the infinite mercy of the atonement, justification by faith only, making faith to consist in a private personal assurance, and scarcely noticing the dutiful necessity of good works. He concluded by an eloquent appeal to his congregation to continue in the faith; but never once alluded to the various means provided by God, through the sacraments and ordinances of His Church, whereby they might have surely been enabled so to do.

Many a bright eye was bedimmed with tears, and many an honest heart was filled with sorrow, at Mr. Wilson's farewell sermon; and he left the place the following day amidst the general regret of his parishioners. His successor in the vicarage was a gentleman of similar principles with himself, equally devoted to his ministerial duties, and equally laborious in his exertion; but he lacked one thing in which Mr. Wilson excelled,—he lacked the power of preaching. From constitutional modesty, he was unable to utter a word without book before a large congregation. True, he had been used to expound the Scripture in a conversational way to a small number of hearers; and when he heard that his predecessor had been in the habit of preaching extempore, and that such a mode would be more acceptable to his congregation, he resolved to make the attempt. But unfortunately it was a complete failure. He lost his presence of mind, and was

unable to utter a sentence. This unlucky beginning, especially as contrasted with the success of his predecessor, proved most prejudicial to the new clergyman's reputation. His written sermons, though of fair average merit, appeared heavy and dull to the morbid and vitiated taste of his hearers; and the effect was felt in the rapid diminution of his congregation. There were no longer crowded aisles, and breathless suspense, and strangers flocking with open mouths from distant parishes to hear the popular preacher, and churchwardens and beadles with white staves, bustling about like masters of the ceremonies, instead of saying their prayers; though, it must be confessed, the simple and solemn liturgy was more devoutly joined in than when the church had been the scene of such excitement; and the congregation, we may be sure, obtained no less benefit when they came to pray to God, than when their object was to "hear" Mr. Wilson.

I do not know, by the way, a more painful sensation, or any expression which grates more harshly on one's ears, than when a person tells you that he is going to church "to *hear* Mr. Such-a-one." It proves so entire a want of right feeling with regard to the true object of assembling in God's house, and so utter a forgetfulness of the holy worship which is due to Him, that one cannot but have a fearful suspicion with regard to the spiritual condition of one who speaks so irreverently.

Besides the inordinate love of preaching, Mr. Wilson had left as a legacy to his successor several other practices, which all tended to the same result, of rendering the congregation insensible to the true principles and discipline of the Church. Indeed, he seemed studiously to have endeavoured to do all in his power to obliterate from people's minds all notions of established order. For, whereas the Church regards the Wednesday and Friday of each week with especial reverence,—the one as being the day of the betrayal, and the other as the crucifixion of our Lord,—Mr. Wilson, quite unconscious of any difference, fixed on Thursday for the assembling of the more serious of his flock. The place chosen for their meeting was the school-house, although the church was not a hundred yards distant; and instead of our beautiful and time-honoured liturgy, he used an extemporary prayer of his own, and then he boasted that the Dissenters attended his lectures! Why, of course they did—when his service was their own, and when, moreover, he scrupled not to appear on equal terms with their preachers on the platform and in the committee-room; thus entirely confounding in men's minds the distinction between the ordained ministers of the Church and the intruder into the shepherd's office, and making the Church appear as one only of many sects.

The event proved that Mr. Wilson's success was perfectly hollow and unsound. It had been the result of a mere personal popularity; and the charm of

his eloquence being no longer present, and no principle of Church-union having been inculcated, but things holy and unholy, sacred and profane, having been placed on the same footing, his flock naturally considered themselves at perfect liberty to wander whithersoever they pleased, and the church was comparatively deserted.

I will not leave this subject, which is a very important one, and at the bottom of the contest which is going on in the world between truth and error, without adding some further remarks by way of explanation.

Christianity is presented to us in the Bible under two aspects, namely, as a *doctrine* and as a *society*. When our Lord sent forth His apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, He declared, "he that believeth, *and is baptized*, shall be saved."[3] It was not enough to "believe" the doctrine, but they must *also* be baptized into the society or Church. So we read that the disciples who believed and were baptized "continued in the apostles' doctrine *and fellowship*."[4] It was not enough to continue to believe the doctrine, but it was necessary that they should continue in the *fellowship* or Church. The same twofold requirement runs through the whole of the New Testament. If the Roman and Galatian converts are instructed by St. Paul in Christian *doctrine*, and a flood of light thrown on the scheme of redemption, for the edification of the Church throughout all ages, no less important

[3] Mark xvi. 16. [4] Acts ii. 42.

are the admonitions which the same apostle gives to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, that they preserve the unity of Christ's body, the Church; and no less valuable are the instructions on the same subject given in the epistles to Titus and Timothy.

What I complain of in the modern evangelical school is, that *they see Christianity only in one view*, and shut their eyes to the other. All their zeal (and it is most worthy of praise and imitation) is directed to spread the Christian *doctrine*, and they care little for the Christian *fellowship*, without which any complete system of doctrine is impossible. For whereas Christ declared, "he that believeth, *and is baptized*, shall be saved," the burden of their preaching is, "*only believe*, and thou shalt be saved." The doctrine of the sacraments they omit or explain away, considering them as mere edifying ceremonies, emblematic of Christian doctrine, or, as it were, acted sermons; instead of being, as they are, the instrumental means of our union with the body, and partaking of the Spirit, of Christ. The mode in which the early Christians "continued in the fellowship," namely, by obeying the same spiritual pastors, joining in the same worship, partaking together of the body and blood of Christ,—all these acts of Christian communion they speak of slightingly,—whereas, in fact, they are the very means whereby the baptismal fellowship is continued, whereby we continue "one with Christ, and He with us," and we with each other, in holy and mysterious union.

The consequence of this defective preaching has been most prejudicial to the cause of the gospel. Missionaries who have been sent out with a view to gather in the heathen to the fold of Christ, preaching, as they supposed, evangelical doctrine, but neglecting the rules of apostolic order and fellowship, have not been attended with that success which, had they preached the gospel more fully, they might reasonably have hoped from God's blessing on their zeal and earnestness. It has been just the same in our parishes at home. There has been a great inculcation of (so-called) evangelical doctrine, insomuch that few persons who attend public worship can fail of knowing the doctrines of justification by faith, the atonement, and other peculiar truths of the Christian religion. But, with all this, never were professing Christians so wanting in true fellowship—never was there so much schism and division; and for this the obvious cause is the extraordinary forgetfulness of one half of the ministerial commission, and the utter neglect to inculcate the doctrines of apostolic order and fellowship, and to set forth the modes ordained by God whereby this order and fellowship are to be maintained.

Within the last few years a decided improvement has been made, and the full and entire scheme of the gospel has been more generally preached. My observations in this chapter apply more strictly to the state of things which existed some twenty years back, which is the period at which my story commences.

There were many parishes then, and I fear there are many, though not *so* many, even now, in which the doctrine of the apostolic fellowship, or of Church-union, was never so much as heard of, and the sinfulness of schism utterly unknown; in which serious people, nay, even ministers, considered that if they believed only certain evangelical truths, it was of no matter whether they worshipped and held communion with the apostolic Church or not; and many, even earnest-minded persons, who "sat under" what they termed a *gospel-ministry*, scarcely knew whether they had ever been admitted by one of God's commissioned ministers into the fellowship of the Church through baptism, and had never partaken of the holy communion in their lives. The enormous evil of this system is apparent in the present prevalence of latitudinarianism and dissent, and has been one very principal cause of the infidelity and lawlessness which has spread throughout the land. *For they who acknowledge not God's authority as exercised by His Church are not likely to yield a willing obedience to any other government.* This principle will be more fully illustrated in the course of the ensuing narrative.

CHAPTER III.

How it happened that our Hero's Parents separated from the Church.

"The thing that hath been, it shall be:"
Through every clime and age
Doth haughty man 'gainst Heaven's decree
The same mad warfare wage.
* * * * *
"The thing that hath been, it shall be:"
The self-same pride this hour
Bids headstrong myriads round us flee
The Church's sheltering bower.

Lyra Apostolica,—Idolatry and Dissent.

"It does not signify," said Mr. Lever to his wife, as they sat comfortably together by the fire after having been at the evening service; "I will not sit any longer under Mr. Onslow. I declare positively I could not keep awake this evening, all I could do. I shall begin snoring some day, and then how foolish I shall look!"

Mrs. Lever might have said, that if John had drunk a glass of ale less at his dinner, he would have been more likely to have kept his eyes open at the sermon; but she did not like to say any thing which might offend her husband, who, to speak the truth, though without any notion of self-denial, could not be charged with intemperance. So she did not re-

turn any direct answer to her husband's remark, but observed,—

"Mr. Onslow is a very good gentleman. I am sure scarcely a day passes that he does not visit poor old deaf Mr. Baker next door; you may hear his voice through the wall reading the Bible to him till he is hoarse; and then he crosses over to the school and spends an hour or more in teaching the children. I do believe every moment of his time is spent in his duties."

"Very like, very like," said John Lever, "but what is all that to me? I want to hear a good sermon, like Mr. Wilson's. Eh, dear! what a figure Mr. Onslow cuts after *him!* Poor man! to see him that day he tried to preach extempore. What a boggle he did make of it, to be sure! I could have hid my face for shame. But it is his own fault: what did he come here for, if he could not do better than that?"

Now Mrs. Lever felt all the while that John was wrong somewhere, but did not precisely know where it was. She was an excellent good-hearted woman, and an amiable wife, who never crossed her husband's somewhat dogged temper, though she often had the skill to direct him without his being aware of it; but in the present instance she did not know exactly what to answer. Having herself been trained in a false system, she did not know that people went to church to pray as well as to hear sermons. Though she prayed very sincerely herself, it had never been

distinctly told her — and she was not prepared with the answer — that prayer was a principal object of going to church; and that the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper was another principal object; and that the mere circumstance of a clergyman not being an eloquent preacher, was no warrant to the congregation to leave the church. All this she felt, and if she herself had been concerned, would still meekly have attended the Church-service; but not having ever been taught that this was her duty — being utterly ignorant of the sin of schism, from which, nevertheless, she prayed every Sunday, in the Litany, to be "delivered," — she knew not how to reply to her husband's unexpected declaration, and therefore she said little, but hoped he would not put his threat into execution. However, she was disappointed.

"I'll tell thee what, Hannah," said Mr. Lever, "I'll go to-morrow and see if I can't get sittings at Mr. Nayler's chapel before they are all taken; that I will."

This was said in a determined voice, and with a resolution which poor Mrs. Lever knew from experience was difficult to resist. But now it was come to the point, she could not help remonstrating with feeling, though not with argument.

"O dear, John, don't let us go over to the Dissenters in this haste, for fear we should repent of it at our leisure. It goes against one's heart to leave the church where one was christened, and where we were married too, John. I am sure no good will

come of it. Do let us consider more about it before we make up our minds."

John was a little moved by this appeal. But he was inclined to be a *liberal;* and no liberal can bear contradiction—least of all from his wife. So John only set himself to look for fresh arguments for what he had made up his mind to do.

"Why, what is a church, after all, but a building like a chapel, only one is made of brick and the other of stone? Why should we not go to one as well as the other? I am told Mr. Nayler preaches just as good doctrine as any Church-parson; and I am sure it is hard if he does not preach better sermons than Mr. Onslow. Besides, I dare say I can get a front seat at the chapel, where we shall hear better. And, to say the truth, I was not over-pleased at the last vestry-meeting: when I proposed a resolution, there was not a soul of them would second it; and I could see Stuchough the churchwarden laughing at me. If I can't hold up my head at the church, I'll warrant I can do so at the chapel."

Poor Hannah, though grieved to the heart, had nothing more to urge in opposition to her husband's arguments.

Next day John Lever put his intention into effect; and so these poor uninstructed people separated themselves from the Church of their country, the true branch of Christ's Apostolic Church in England, in sheer ignorance of their danger and sinfulness. They cut themselves off from the prayers of

the Church universal, from the holy sacraments, the communion of the faithful; — and what for? just that John Lever might be gratified with having his ears tickled by a more agreeable preacher, and be a more consequential person than he was before.

I would just beg any one to read the first part of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, and desire him to tell me what it means, if it does not condemn as sinful the separation of Christian people from the Church: —

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name ot our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, . . that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? . . . I, brethren, when I came unto you, *came not with excellency of speech* or of wisdom. . . . My speech and my preaching *was not with enticing words* of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. . . . Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? . . . Let no man deceive himself. . . . Let no man glory in men." See

how sharply the apostle rebukes the people of Corinth for their divisions. If any one thing is evident from this part of Scripture, it is this,—that *all Christians resident in the same town, or city, or country, ought to be of one communion;* and that none should separate from the apostolic fellowship,—especially for so very silly a reason as the supposed personal deficiency of their teacher. The visible Church is not a mere building of brick or stone; but it is a spiritual edifice, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone. It is that visible community which was formed by the first apostles, and has since continued to the present time. And that which constitutes the union of Christians in this visible Church, is the living in obedience to the same divinely-commissioned pastors, the joining in the same holy creeds or confessions of faith, offering up the same prayers to the throne of grace, partaking of the same sacraments, and dwelling together in sacred concord. When Christian neighbours refuse these tokens of union, and, instead of worshipping and breaking bread together, gather round some particular preacher of their own choosing, and vex and oppose each other, then it is evident that there is a grievous fault somewhere. And those who for insufficient reasons have left the one true Church, are guilty of the sin of schism; a sin which seems to occupy in some respects the same place under the Christian covenant as idolatry under the Jewish, and to be one of the most fearful

offences of which we can well be guilty against the holy law of God.

I do not mean that it is as bad as burning children in the fire to Moloch, or as the gross impurities of the worship of Baal: it is more like the crime of the Israelites, to which they were so remarkably addicted, of deserting the appointed service, and worshipping God under the similitude of an idol—as when Aaron made the golden calf in Horeb, and Jeroboam the two calves at Bethel and at Dan. From mere worldly motives, misled by faction, or weary of the truth, the Israelites were continually leaving the appointed worship of their God; and, in like manner, the Dissenters, making an idol of their party, or flattering their own self-will, desert the communion of the Church, and set up a service and ministers of their own, instead of abiding by those which God Himself has prepared for them.

Dissenters appear to be quite unaware of what their separation from the Church involves. It is possible that they may hear much the same doctrine at their meeting-house as at some churches; but, since the whole efficacy of preaching depends on the grace of God accompanying it, it by no means follows that even the same doctrine, preached by uncommissioned ministers, should be as profitable as when delivered by those whom God Himself hath sent. And still more as regards the sacraments. The sacraments, we know, are "necessary for salvation," to those who have the means of obtaining

them. What proof have we that sacraments administered by unordained persons are not a mere mockery, and incapable of conveying grace? And if so, *how can the Dissenter be sure that he has ever been baptized, or ever really partaken of the body and blood of Christ*, without which there is no life in him? Let the Dissenter well consider whether the separation from the Church, of which he thinks so lightly, may not place him in a most awful and perilous position.

CHAPTER IV.

Change of Principle brings with it a change of Associates.

> Lay aside
> That right-asserting attitude of soul,
> Ere in the Christian temple thou abide;
> Where he who dwells must dwell on bended knees,
> From his own merits praying to be free.
>
> *The Cathedral.*

Not a word of the conversation recorded in the last chapter was lost upon little Charles Lever, who sat on a stool before the fire while his parents were discussing the propriety of separation from the Church.

Charles Lever was a quick intelligent lad, inheriting much of his mother's amiableness and strong feeling, but crossed with the dogged temper of his father. Hitherto the maternal influence had predominated, as might have been expected in one of such tender years. He was grieved to see his mother in distress, and was disposed to think her in the right. Still the impression left on his mind, by the conversation which he had heard, was, that religion was a matter of private choice and inclination, and that we are to worship God according to our own will or fancy.

One effect of John Lever's separation from the Church was, that a considerable change took place

in his associates. John had an intimate friend, named Joseph Franklin, a farmer, who lived about a mile from the town. He was a near relation of his wife's, and a constant intimacy had been kept up between them. Franklin was a good specimen of an English yeoman — of what English yeomen once were, and what, I verily believe, many still are. For it is in this class, more than in any other, that, as it would seem by a merciful arrangement of Providence, the old national character is preserved. There it is that much of the real strength and stamina of the nation still dwell. Call their feelings and notions prejudices, if you please; but they are of a thousand times more value than all the new-fangled nonsense of modern days. Franklin was honest, upright, independent, industrious; his character was known and respected in all the country round. If a dispute arose between a landlord and tenant, Franklin was the man to settle it. When Franklin valued an estate, both parties were satisfied; or if one was not, every body was quite sure that he was in the wrong. In one respect, Franklin differed from many of his brother-yeomen, and farmers in general; though it was not any thing in which another may not do just as well as Franklin. He had been accustomed all his life to employ much of his leisure-time in reading, and was well acquainted with many of our English standard authors and divines. This, of course, greatly softened and improved his character, but without making him in the least conceited; for, with

all his practical shrewdness and acquirements, Franklin was a humble-minded Christian.

On the very next market-day after Lever changed his religion, he received a visit from his friend.

"How now, John?" said farmer Franklin; "why, they tell me you have turned meetinger: it is not true, I hope?"

"It is, though," said John, doggedly, at the same time half ashamed.

"I am heartily sorry for it, then," replied his friend.

"Why?" said Lever; "why should not I go to worship where I choose?"

"Go where you choose?" said Franklin, "that's a bad principle to act on. We ought to worship God as *He* chooses, not as *we* choose; and, to my poor judgment, He has appointed His church for us to worship Him in."

"But if I judge otherwise," said Lever, "and choose to go to the chapel instead of the church, what right have you or any other man to call me to account, I would be glad to know?"

This was not said in the most friendly tone; and farmer Franklin saw very plainly that Lever was not in a temper to discuss the matter coolly. When a man more than half suspects he is wrong, but is resolved to stick to his point, he will most commonly, like Lever, bring the aid of passion to reinforce the dubious position occupied by his reason, and cut short all argument by an outburst of ill temper.

Joseph Franklin, perceiving his friend's frame of mind, replied calmly: "My good friend, this is far too serious a matter to be discussed lightly or angrily. I do not claim to have any right to dictate to you, or call you to account; though I should be right glad if I could persuade you to keep to the Church in which you were born and bred, until it shall be proved that she teaches what is contrary to God's word. However, I will not argue the matter with you now, but recommend you to pray to God for His guidance; and I hope He will bring you to a better mind. *The time perhaps will come*," he concluded emphatically, "*when you will be anxious to return to the arms of the Church.*"

This conversation had a considerable effect on Lever's mind, but he was too proud to confess himself in error. He had left the Church, not because he believed the Church was wrong, but *because he chose;* and the same temper now made him stick to what he had done, though his conscience strongly remonstrated against it. However, having made up his mind to persist in his dissent, he avoided any further conversation with Franklin, of whose sound judgment and firmness of principle he felt some degree of awe.

Joseph Franklin was not a mere follower of the path in which he had been brought up, — though for an unlearned man, who is unable to inquire for himself, that is at least a safe principle to go upon, — but he was one who read his Bible, and, what is

more, made a rule of acting on it. He was, in short, what many people of the present day would call a bigot; that is, a man who acted strictly according to what he believed to be the will of God. He remembered, as he thought, several very strong texts in Scripture respecting the sinfulness of dissent, and the duty of Churchmen with regard to those persons who are guilty of it. Accordingly, as soon as he got home, he took down his Bible and looked for the passages in question. In the second Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians[1] he found the following solemn admonition:—"Now I command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw yourselves* from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received of us." Again, he read in the Epistle to the Romans,[2] "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine that ye have received, and *avoid them.*" Joseph thought a good deal of these texts, and others which bore upon the same subject, and read them over several times. "If these texts mean any thing," said he to himself, "they must apply to the behaviour of Churchmen with regard to Dissenters. I verily believe the Church of England to be the true branch of the Church in England. Its doctrines and services are according to Scripture; its discipline, under the three orders of bishops,

[1] Ch. iii. 6. [2] Ch. xvi. 17.

priests, and deacons, is like that founded by the apostles, as we read in the Acts and the Epistles—our clergy have received authority to teach and administer the sacraments in regular succession, from those whom Christ our Lord commissioned: surely, therefore, those who separate themselves from the Church, and so cause divisions, teaching things contrary to the doctrines which we have received, are the persons whom St. Paul warns us to withdraw from and avoid." Franklin thought he saw also the reason of this precept. He knew that it was his duty to obey, whether he saw the reason or not; but in this case the reason seemed to be obvious, namely, that good Churchmen might be saved from the danger which must result from evil communication. If we associate with those who are guilty of the sin of schism, we shall be liable to fall into the same error; or, at least, to the danger of believing that difference of religious belief is of no consequence—a feeling which has a direct tendency to infidelity. Besides, we shall make *them* suppose that we do not consider their schism to be sinful, and that we think just as well of them as of those who worship God as He has commanded; and, seeing other people as good friends with them as ever, they will of course be the more confirmed in their error.

The consequence of the honest farmer's deliberation and search into his Bible for instruction was, that on the next market-day, instead of looking in, as he usually did, to get his luncheon at Lever's, he

went to the ordinary at the Britannia. And this conduct he persisted in. Any thing like contempt or unkind words towards his old friend he most carefully avoided. Indeed he behaved, whenever they met, with a marked kindness of manner, holding himself in readiness for any opening that Lever might give him for a serious discussion of the question. But in this he was disappointed. Lever never once reverted to the subject; and Franklin, seeing him determined to persist in his separation from the Church, thenceforth avoided any intimacy beyond what the closeness of their connexion absolutely required.

Whether from the same motives, or from a natural disrelish of the society of one whose opinions had undergone so great a change, it so happened that many others of Lever's old friends dropped off one by one; and in like manner a new set gradually sought his company. Lever's new associates were quite a different sort of persons from his former friends. They were dissatisfied and dogmatical; great arguers and politicians — men who thought they could put all things to rights, who set themselves against all authority, spoke disrespectfully of the Church and her ministers, retailed every story which they heard to their disadvantage, at the same time making much vaunt of their own wisdom and enlightenment. By communication with these persons, Lever was still further confirmed in his dissent, and his feelings gradually more and more alienated

from the Church, and, by natural consequence, from the institutions of his country.

It was under such circumstances as these that the intelligent mind of Charles Lever was trained; and he learned to admire the self-confident and dogmatic opinions of those whom he daily listened to. His father also, deceived by the clever argumentative powers of his liberal friends, was anxious to see his son excel in the same line; and so encouraged him in arguing and expressing his opinions, even though sometimes in contradiction to himself. Thus, as Charles Lever advanced in years, his mother's influence gradually lost ground, and he fell more and more into his father's ways of thinking and acting,—ways which were too much in accordance with the evil bias of the human mind. And though, when he put his lesson into practice, and ventured to dispute his father's authority, he was sometimes sternly rebuked, and obedience enforced; yet example had far more efficacy than precept, and Charles imbibed his father's self-will and love of opposition, though obliged in his presence to control it. Thus did Charles Lever learn self-wilfulness and deceit at once. He learned to cavil and resist where he was able, and to submit himself only when compelled; whereas the Church-principle is to *submit ourselves to authority, and to resist only when obliged.* Alas, little did his father dream that, in thus undermining the reverent and dutiful disposition which is so

amiable in a child — a disposition which the Christian of whatever age is bound to imitate, — he was cherishing the vain and self-willed feelings of human nature, and treasuring up both for himself and his son a bitter reckoning in time to come!

CHAPTER V.

The State of Education at Laxington.

We name the world a school—for day by day
We something learn, till we are call'd away:
The school we name a world—for vice and pain,
Fraud and contention, there begin to reign;
And much, in fact, this lesser world can shew
Of grief and crime that in the greater grow.

CRABBE.

WHEN Charles Lever had arrived, as his parents judged, at a proper age, he was sent to school. Now in the town of Laxington there was only one school of higher pretensions than the national school; and that certainly *was* a school of some *pretensions*.

The following was its inviting prospectus:

"LAXINGTON COMMERCIAL ACADEMY,

For Cheap and Expeditious Education,

KEPT BY T. TOPHAM.

"T. Topham begs to return his grateful thanks to the commercial and agricultural inhabitants of Laxington and its vicinity, and takes the opportunity of assuring them that, by unremitting care and diligence, it will ever be his ambition to merit a continuance of their distinguished patronage.

"T. T. continues to instruct the young gentle-

men of his establishment in English grammar, writing in all its branches, orthography, calligraphy, stenography, geography with the use of the globes, arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, mathematics, land-surveying, linear drawing, natural and moral philosophy, Scripture history and gymnastics.—Terms fifteen shillings per quarter.

"N.B. French and dancing taught by eminent professors in those branches."

Whether Mr. T. T. understood the meaning of half the fine words in his prospectus is rather doubtful. Before he became a schoolmaster, Mr. Topham had been a broken-down tradesman (if, indeed, a tradesman can be called broken-down who began with nothing, and ended with nothing—who set up on credit, and ended in bankruptcy). Having failed in business, he commenced teaching a school on the same capital; and his new employment was likely to be of the same duration as the former,—that is to say, as long as his credit should last. Hitherto he had found it more easy to satisfy the public with regard to the value of his scholastic qualifications than of his cloths and muslins, the flimsy texture of the latter being more palpable than that of the former. With a good stock of assurance, and a facility of adapting himself to the tempers of the good people of Laxington, Mr. Topham had attained for his school no inconsiderable share of patronage; and one cause of his popularity was a discreet for-

bearance to express any decided opinion upon religion or politics.

I remember a story of a French gentleman, who took his two boys to place them at a provincial school in France, and, after much conversation with the master respecting the studies which he desired his sons should enter upon, and other matters connected with their welfare, was about to drive off in his carriage, leaving his sobbing boys under the care of the pedagogue. Just as he was on the point of departing, the master called out—the subject having only just then for the first time occurred to him—"Mais, monsieur, quelle religion faut-il enseigner à vos enfans? J'en connais toutes"—[By the by, sir, what religion shall I teach your children? I know all sorts.][1]

Mr. Topham's plan was not exactly the same as that of the French professor—in truth, not quite so good. He taught a sort of *general* religion, if religion it could be called, which might suit all his pupils. They read the Bible as a book of ancient history, and then were left to form their own judgment on its contents and meaning. To be sure there was a book of questions which the children were expected to answer, in order to aid their historical researches:—Who was the first man? who was the first woman? in what year was Christ born? But who our Lord Jesus Christ is, whether God or man

[1] See Letter to Lord Lansdowne, on Education, by the Rev. R. I. Wilberforce.

—how fallen man is to be saved—how to seek for holiness—what is the Church of Christ—what the nature of a sacrament—such things as these were never told them. Nor, indeed, was Mr. Topham himself ever known to have committed himself by an opinion on these subjects.

Perhaps there is no point on which the Church and the world are so diametrically opposed as on the subject of education. The world says,—sometimes in so many words, but more frequently in spirit, and without avowing it,—"Do not bring your children up in religious prejudices—defer their religious instruction until they are of age to judge for themselves." This is a most palpable delusion of Satan. It is as if Satan were to say to a parent, "It is unfair in you to instil Christian doctrines and principles into your child before he is able to exercise his judgment on them. You are taking an unjust advantage over me. Leave your child unprejudiced until he is come to years of discretion, and then let us start fair, and each do our best to persuade him." Would any parent listen to such a proposal, if it were made openly by the Evil One? And yet men are wont to look upon it as something reasonable when philosophical liberals forbid them to instil into their children's hearts the doctrines and principles of God's true religion. The Church acts in a manner directly the reverse. She places her seal upon the child before he is able to discern between good and evil. She grafts him by baptism into the body of Christ,

bids him renounce Satan, teaches him precisely what he is to believe, places before him the commandments which he is to obey, and sets him forward in the path which, if he will follow, he is safe. She does not desire him to exercise his choice as to the path in which he will walk, but points out to him the true path, and bids him, by God's help, walk in it.

It was under the general, or neutral system, that the rising generation of Laxington was trained; the master of the Laxington academy being of opinion that it would be more convenient (for him) that the parents should teach their children at home what religious opinions they chose, and send them all to his school to receive instruction in other matters. Young Franklin, and a few others, who were blessed with sound-principled, conscientious, church-going parents, took little mischief from this system; but nine-tenths of the parents were either too busy, or too idle, or too ignorant, to supply the deficiency of their children's education in this most vital of all points.

Charles Lever was of that active and intelligent mind that he would have acquired a certain degree of knowledge from any system; and under the tuition of Mr. Topham he gained a good deal of general, rambling, ill-arranged information of one sort or another. Nor was his religious education neglected by his excellent mother: but then, as we have seen, she was herself sadly misinformed on many important points of Christian faith and duty; and though,

had she been left to herself, she might have taught her son much good which she herself had received, yet her instruction was continually marred by the doggedness of her husband, who, by this time, had imbibed all the bitterness and prejudice of sectarianism.

How clearly do these facts — which are but a literal description of what is taking place all over England — prove the necessity of an authoritative system of education on Church-principles, in order to save the rising generation from ignorant, unprincipled masters, and careless, uninstructed parents. Surely it is time for all earnest-minded Christians to offer up their daily prayers, and at the same time use their most strenuous exertions, that the great effort now made by the Church, through her diocesan boards, to remedy the utterly inadequate system of education which is prevalent, and to train fit masters for our schools, may be brought to a successful issue. The Church comes forward, and acknowledges her duty to afford religious instruction to all her children. She confesses that she has received a commission, not only to "feed the sheep," but also the "lambs" of Christ's fold. Hitherto she has not effected so much as she could desire; now she is anxious to extend her instruction to all to whom her divine commission extends. But in acknowledging her duty, she calls on her wealthier members to furnish her with the means of performing it, and she invites all classes to co-operate with

her in her endeavours. Her first object is to afford a due supply of masters, who shall be able to communicate a sound religious education, as "being found meet, as well for learning and dexterity in teaching, as for sober and honest conversation, and also for right understanding of God's true religion."[2] Her next object is, to supply schools wheresoever they are needed; so that, as there is a church in every parish, where men may hear the word of God and receive the sacraments, so there may be schools where every Churchman may send his children, with a good assurance that they will be brought up in sound religious principles. Such is the good work in which the Church now calls for the co-operation of all her members.

[2] See the seventy-seventh canon.

CHAPTER VI.

State of Affairs at Laxington during our Hero's Minority.

> The homely beauty of the good old cause
> Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
> And pure religion breathing household laws.
> . . . . . .
> . . . England is a fen
> Of stagnant waters: altar, sword and pen,
> Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower
> Of happiness. We are selfish men:
> O raise us up, and come to us again,
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
>
> WORDSWORTH.

FEW changes in recent times, not even the Reform in Parliament itself, have been productive of more important moral results, as regards the middle and poorer classes in our towns, than the Municipal Act. The English are, or rather were, a people naturally much given to regard those in authority over them. Though liable to fits of waywardness and insubordination, yet their general character has been a loyal submission to the powers that be. The Municipal Reform Act introduced into most of our English corporate towns an entire change in the administrators of local government. In Laxington, as in most other places, the former corporation consisted of old-fashioned Church-and-King men, who were uniformly chosen

from amongst the most respectable people in the town. No doubt they had their faults—who is without them? Still, on the whole, the influence which they exercised was good. The people saw men in office who held loyal and religious principles; men who went to church and honoured the King—men of character, respectability, and consistency. It very rarely happened that a member of the corporation was guilty of any crime, or great misdemeanor. Whatever faults they had were quite of a different character. And even these were fast giving way before the force of public opinion. The old corporations were becoming alive to the value of modern improvements; and a very slight alteration in their constitution would have made them quite as efficient for local government and improvement as any which are likely to succeed them, and in many respects infinitely more so; for they carried with them the good feeling of all the best inhabitants of the place, amongst whom they and their forefathers had been well known as honest men for many generations.

Instead of these old Church-and-King men, who united with their regard for the laws a due proportion of English independence, a set of persons of entirely different habits and feelings were now brought into power. They were chiefly men who had made themselves conspicuous as noisy agitators; many of them dissenters; some of no religion whatever; almost all persons of no consideration; new settlers in

the town, who might be gone to-morrow; speculators, who might be rich one day and bankrupts the next; men with no hold on the present affections or past recollections of the community over whom they were placed—their sole support being the power which they exercised, by force or flattery, over the votes of the lower sort of electors. What was the consequence of this change? Why, that all the old hereditary respect for authority was annihilated; the moral influence of good principle and respectability, coupled with office, was taken away. Men saw the influence of office lodged in improper hands, and exerted to promote the worst principles; and they learned to despise and dislike the office, on account of the unworthiness of those who filled it.

Nor was this the only, nor perhaps the principal mischief. There was another most pernicious consequence, of which Laxington will furnish no bad example. The municipal constituency of Laxington consisted of between six and seven hundred voters; perhaps there might be about three hundred conservatives and three hundred liberals; and the victory in each election depended on the votes of thirty or forty of the most unprincipled and ill-conditioned voters in the town. Whichever party could intimidate, or cajole, or bribe the greater number of these electors, was sure of the victory. It need not be stated, therefore, to which side the victory generally inclined. The system was mischievous enough, and productive of abundant evil, when limited to the

election of members of parliament every four or five years. But when the municipal elections took place every year, and sometimes more frequently, if vacancies occurred during the intervals, it may readily be imagined what deep and extensive evil was the result.

The effects of the new municipal system extended themselves throughout the whole community. When the first election took place, Charles Lever was one of the biggest boys at Mr. Topham's school; and, as might have been expected, the angry feeling of the town communicated itself to the play-yard. Mr. Topham, having at his academy boys whose parents belonged to both parties, professed himself neuter. Happening, however, to look out of window, he saw an unusual bustle in the play-ground. The young radicals had mounted Charles Lever, or, as he was commonly called Clever Charley, on a chair, and were parading him in triumph round the yard, while the young Tories were performing the same honours to Farmer Franklin's son, who was the representative of the conservative interests. All this went on in great good humour for a while, until, at length, the two parties came into collision with each other, and a general clamour ensued, which soon increased into a fight. The Tories, being the stouter boys, had the advantage; and young Lever was soon toppled down from his elevation, amidst the triumphant shouts of the opposite faction. Mr. Topham seeing how things were going, and observing that the liberals had the

worst of it, came out, cane in hand, and put an end to the riot, reading the Tories a severe lecture on the impropriety of their conduct.

Such scenes, however laughable at the time, were highly prejudicial to the moral feelings of our young hero. He was bred up amidst political strife, and in habits of disrespect for those in office. Instead of imbibing the old English feeling of deference for his superiors, Charles was taught to abuse and ridicule the natural aristocracy of the place. And those whom the circumstances of the times had placed in power were such as no man could have reverenced, if he would ;—being partly tools, partly leaders of the populace, dependent for their elevation on the breath of those very people whom it was their duty to govern. Even the magistracy shared the disadvantage and contempt of the system ; for though the act of parliament expressly reserved to the crown the right of appointing magistrates, the minister of the day practically evaded the law by appointing the nominees of the corporation.

The radicals of Laxington, once possessed of power, determined not to lose it for want of availing themselves of every means at their command. One important object with them was the establishment of a newspaper on liberal principles. But a large outlay was necessary for the purpose, and this, for a while, stood in the way of the accomplishment of their wishes. In this dilemma, they applied to a Whig lord who had considerable property and influence in the

borough, and nominated one of the members. True, they hated his politics almost as much as those of the Tories, and had been the loudest to cry out against his unjust interference with their representation. But at the present time it suited both parties to enter into an alliance offensive and defensive. His lordship, on his part, was most anxious to retain his influence in the borough. He had uncles, and brothers, and sons, and other relatives, either holding government-offices, or hoping to hold them; and their emolument, as well as family importance, depended on the maintenance of the existing government: for they were a needy, extravagant family, and not over-scrupulous as to the means which they took to recruit their wasted finances. It was therefore worth his lordship's while to contribute a good round sum towards setting up the *Lexington Chronicle*. And so this noble Whig was made the means or tool of establishing a violent radical paper, of the worst possible principles.

The newspaper served the purpose of the radicals in many ways. First, it furnished a dish of liberal politics every week, well seasoned with abuse of the Tories, for the edification of their fellow-townsmen, who, if they were so unwise as to read the paper, were likely to take their complexion from the food on which they fed. Then it intimidated many quiet or weak-minded persons, who could not bear to be dragged out into notoriety, and have their sayings and doings laid, in an exaggerated shape, before the public. It disseminated calumnies with impunity; for

a person attacked or misrepresented could not defend himself with the same weapons with which he was assailed. He was sure to come off with loss; like a well-dressed man fighting with a chimney-sweeper. If he sent a moderate answer, it was inserted with ostentatious impartiality, but did more harm than good; for to the morbid taste of the readers his moderate style appeared mere milk and water, and gave the impression that he was unable to defend himself with spirit. Besides it laid the unfortunate writer open to a reply, in which his strong points were passed over, and any minor position which he had left unguarded was assailed with advantage, and gave the appearance of a triumph to his opponents, as well as subjected him to a new volley of vituperation.

Another mode of annoying the Church-and-King party was to publish at full length and make the most of every Romish or Protestant Dissenters' meeting, and either pass over or speak slightingly of every similar demonstration on the part of the Church. Even the statements which clergymen made in their sermons were misquoted or garbled, and commented on by a host of anonymous writers, signing themselves Churchmen, or friends of the Church: as if friendship for the Church consisted in blazing to the world her imperfections.

The unfairness and uncharitableness of the managers of the paper was nothing in comparison with the venom diffused by the means of correspondents. The editor deemed it prudent to keep up some shew of

decency and moderation, professing himself a believer in revealed religion, and not absolutely to desire a revolution. But the pages of his paper were open to anonymous correspondents for the discussion of all subjects, and the promulgation of the worst opinions. The avowed principle was, that discussion served to elicit truth; in spite of the evident fact, that the readers were sure to believe that truth lay on the side of their corrupt passions or interests. On this plea of fair discussion, the most flagitious, infidel, revolutionary, atheistical principles found their way into the paper, and were greedily swallowed by the more ignorant portion of the community of Laxington. The most extraordinary assumption on the part of the conductors of this notable journal was, that they were the *friends of the poor!* while they were doing all in their power to make them discontented and restless—dissatisfied with their condition, and suspicious of those whom God had sent to teach them the way of salvation: and their principles, if carried out, would infallibly bring many poor men to misery both in this world and the next.

I have already said that this paper was established mainly from funds contributed by a liberal lord; his object being to strengthen his interest, with a view to the representation of the borough. The paper was supported and taken in by many respectable liberal families in the neighbourhood—liberal attorneys invariably sent their advertisements to it, with a view to its support and continuance;—and, will it be be-

lieved that the ostensible editor and manager was the mayor of Laxington!

Thus was blasphemy, sedition, and revolution, spread amongst the community, by the apparent encouragement of those in authority, and with the acquiescence of some who, in a worldly point of view, were considered amongst the most respectable people in the neighbourhood: and these persons never considered the enormous retribution which was likely to fall on their heads, even in this world, by the inculcation of such dangerous principles amongst an ill-educated population, and the still more terrible judgment which, in the world to come, awaits those who shall cause their poorest brethren to offend. All they looked to was the support of their party, to which, from interest or mere want of consideration, they had attached themselves.

Surely it is time for all serious persons to consider well what they are about, in encouraging liberal opinions, and to withdraw, before it is too late, from a party, the obvious tendency of which is to overturn all the principles of loyalty and religion.

Farmer Franklin, standing aloof from the politics of Laxington, looked on nevertheless with sorrow, and at the same time with astonishment. "I can understand," he would sometimes say, "why A—— and B—— and C—— are radicals. I can understand why a crack-brained fellow that is able to spout at a club should be a radical: it makes him think himself a man of consequence. And I can understand why a

briefless lawyer, or a feeless doctor, or a broken-down bankrupt, or a drunken servant out of place, should be radicals. They 'may be better—can't be worse.' Something may turn up in a general scramble for their advantage. But how quiet sort of men, living respectably,—how John Lever, for instance, with his good business, who can't put five words together in a speech, how he should be a radical, and bring up that fine young lad of his in the same folly, I own is past my comprehension."

CHAPTER VII.

The Civil and Religious Liberty Club.

Liberty plucks justice by the nose;
The baby beats the nurse; and quite athwart
Goes all decorum. SHAKSPEARE.

Such were the influences under which the early youth of Charles Lever was trained. A dissenting father, a latitudinarian schoolmaster, a radical magistracy, and a revolutionary and atheistical press! Can we be surprised that young Lever grew up in politics a democrat, in religion—it is difficult to say what.

And such, alas! it is to be feared, is the character of a large body of young men in the present day. They are demoralised by the circumstances which surround them: and so far the Socialists' doctrine is true. But though the Socialist has discerned the source of the evil, he has failed to perceive the remedy which the mercy of God has provided. He is ignorant that the true remedy for all moral evil is the following out those good motions, and availing ourselves of those continual helps, which are afforded by the various inspirations of His Holy Spirit. No man, especially one who has been adopted by God at baptism, is left without the means of successfully combating against the power of evil.

There were, as there always will be in a state of society where, by the providence of God, good is mingled with evil, some counteracting influences, which tended to prevent the utter degradation of Lever's character. He still retained a warm attachment for his excellent mother, and imbibed a portion of that generous truth-loving spirit which she herself had unconsciously adopted from her early communion with the Church. Nor was his mother without sense to detect, and spirit to expose, many of the fallacies into which her dogged husband and headstrong son would fall. Thus was Charles's career in liberalism often checked by the timely admonition and remonstrances of an affectionate parent, against which his conscience, though it waxed daily feebler and feebler, would not always suffer him to rebel.

Another happy influence was an early friendship which he formed at school with his young relative, the son of farmer Franklin. George Franklin was a lad about his own age, and not unlike him in natural generosity and boldness of temper; but, as may be supposed, entirely different in acquired sentiments and principles. Before their respective principles were developed, they were great allies. Their first serious alienation was on the occasion of the municipal election before alluded to, when they warmly espoused opposite sides. Similar causes of dispute afterwards occurred frequently; and though their regard for each other was not extinguished, yet their difference of opinion and pursuits soon placed

a bar to their intimacy. As their characters more and more diverged, George Franklin grew up a manly true-hearted Englishman,—Charles Lever, *a man of the nineteenth century.*

It is surprising for what a length of time attachments formed at school will last, especially between those who have learnt to respect each other. Two boys of about equal age, who have gone through school together, who have grown up in habits of intimacy, have struggled with each other for the head of the class, have read together, played together, raced together, kicked each other's shins at football, and perhaps given each other black eyes and bloody noses in a pitched battle—it is surprising what an attachment will often subsist between them in after-life, even in spite of the greatest difference of circumstances and character.

Although, therefore, Lever and young Franklin did not often meet at each other's homes, on account of the wide difference of opinion which subsisted between their parents, yet whenever they did come into contact, it was with a considerable degree of cordiality and mutual regard.

The young liberals of Laxington had formed themselves into a society called the *Civil and Religious Liberty Club*, of which Charles Lever was a prominent member. He made many attempts to persuade his old friend to belong to the club, or at least to attend some of its meetings. It would have

been a great object to get so respectable and popular a young fellow as Franklin to join them, and his influence would have brought others over, and have greatly furthered the cause. Such were the ostensible reasons which Charles Lever gave to himself for importuning his friend to attend the club; and as Franklin did not care to enter into an argument with him, Charles was under the impression that his persuasion might prove effectual. But if the truth must be told, the real reason, unknown perhaps to Lever himself, was a vain wish that his old associate should hear him make a speech at the club, where he fancied he appeared in his full glory. George had been his match at football and racing, and had been as often at the head of the class as he; and when they had once fought for two hours, till they could neither of them see, the battle had been considered a drawn one; but Charles flattered himself that in speechifying he should beat his old friend hollow.

"I am on my way to the club," said he, overtaking Franklin one fine evening in the street; "I wish you would come with me; we shall have an interesting discussion to-night. It is to be about Hampden and the ship-money; and I am to open the debate."

"Why should you wish me to go to your meeting?" said Franklin; "you know my opinions are quite different from yours on these matters. I shall only hear what I don't like, or say what you would not wish to hear."

"Oh, as to that," said Lever, "we ought to accustom ourselves to hear both sides of the question; '*audi alteram partem*,' you know, as Mr. Topham used to say."

"How many of you are there?" asked Franklin.

"The club consists of forty, and we generally muster between twenty and thirty on debating nights. They are all young fellows, about our standing; several of them old schoolfellows;—Ned Gapes, and Nayler, and young M'Gab, and Whitty, and Sparks."

"What's the name of your club?"

"The Civil and Religious Liberty Club," said Lever, a little mortified by the slight symptom of contempt which his friend unconsciously exhibited in his manner.

George Franklin mused for a minute, not from any weakness or irresolution—that was not in his character—but from a thought which had struck him. "Well," said he, "I don't care if I go with you for once."

"That's right, Franklin! come along!" said Charles Lever; so in they went together; the latter not a little proud of his companion, whom he hoped to make a convert, or, at least, to strike dumb by the brilliance of his speech, which he had been conning over for the last week.

It was not long before the business of the evening commenced. The president took his seat in due form; the minutes of the last meeting were read;

two new members balloted for, and duly elected; and another expelled on account of not having paid up his subscription. The grand debate of the evening was somewhat impeded by an incidental discussion on the propriety of endeavouring to obtain a new room, the mistress of the house having made a most unreasonable extra charge of sixpence a night for cleaning the room after it had been used by the club.

All these things being at last adjusted, the young politicians proceeded to discuss the conduct of Hampden and King Charles. It must be confessed that Charles Lever opened the debate in a very fluent and creditable speech—creditable, that is, in point of delivery, for the matter of it was trashy and superficial enough; and some of those who spoke after him were not deficient in talent. Franklin could not help remarking, however, that the debate on the conduct of Hampden did not cause half the real interest and excitement as that respecting the payment of sixpence a night to Molly Turnpenny for sweeping the room; the reason being, that the latter question was one of present interest, and within the compass of the understanding of the speakers; whereas in the former they were all wide of the mark, and far from being acquainted with the facts and bearings of the subject. Besides, in the question of Molly Turnpenny there had been two parties, one of which considered her a cheat, the other as an ill-used woman; and a good deal of ingenious argu-

ment and personal collision had been elicited; but in the case of Hampden and King Charles, the argument was all on one side, no member of the Civil and Religious Club having been found bold enough to take upon himself the defence of the poor king; so that after the young orators had each had his turn for displaying his power of speechifying, the question was carried without a division.

"And now, gentlemen," said Lever, "before we separate, allow me to propose to you a new member —a gentleman of whose ability and virtue all of us, I am sure, have the highest opinion. I need not say, that I mean Mr. George Franklin."

The proposal was greeted by loud cheers; and the secretary was proceeding to enter his name as a candidate, but Franklin interposed, and begged that they would allow him to decline the honour which they proposed to confer upon him, for reasons with which he did not think it necessary to trouble them.

"Nay," said Lever, "I am sure we shall be most happy to hear your reasons."

This was said, it must be confessed, rather maliciously; for Lever thought that his friend would either be too bashful to speak at all, or else, if he attempted, would make a failure. To his surprise, however, Franklin stood up without the least shamefacedness, and prepared to address the meeting. He was, in fact, one of those clear-headed, straightforward men who are never wanting at a pinch. Having a due respect for himself, and knowing that he was as

well informed at least as most of those who were present, he felt not the slightest embarrassment in delivering his thoughts before them.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have been induced by my old friend Lever to attend your meeting to-night, though I told him at the time, as I have often told him before, that my opinions were very different from those of others who were likely to be present. I should not have troubled you with my observations, and should have been content to sit in the capacity of a listener, but for the invitation which I have just received; nor will I now proceed, except with the assurance that it will not be considered intrusive in a stranger to address you, even should he utter sentiments which may differ from those of the meeting."

Franklin's open, straightforward manner at once gained him the attention of the audience; and they expressed, by a very general applause, their desire to hear him farther.

"Well, then," continued Franklin, "since it is your pleasure, gentlemen, to hear what I have to say, I will state to you very briefly the reasons why I must decline the honour of belonging to your society.

"Allow me to observe, in the first place, that I really don't know what is the precise object of your association. Your club is formed, if I am rightly informed, for the promotion of civil and religious liberty. (*Hear, hear.*) From which it would seem that, in the opinion of its members, the people of

England either are not in possession of civil and religious liberty, or are in danger of losing it. (*Hear.*) I confess I cannot, for the life of me, see that either of these evils is in the least degree to be apprehended, provided only we keep to our present laws and constitution. *I have never in my life found myself prevented from doing what my conscience told me was right; and what was wrong I do not wish to have the liberty of doing.* Once, indeed, I remember thinking myself very hardly used, when Lever and I were locked up during a half-holyday, for going out of bounds. But that is the greatest outrage which was ever offered to my liberty. I live perfectly free. There is nothing which I am prevented doing, except what is contrary to my welfare, or that of my neighbours, or repugnant to the divine law. I get up when I like, go to bed when I like, go a journey when I like, come home when I like, speak when I like, am silent when I like, in short, I do every thing that I like. True, I am not at liberty to transgress the laws of God or man; but that I have no wish to do. If I had, it would be right that I should be restrained. I may not trespass on my neighbour's land, because that would be doing what *he* does not like, and infringing on *his* liberty. For the same reason I may not take possession of his house, or goods, or cattle, unless I give him a sum which he would like to accept for them. For the same reason, I do not think I should be justified in being idle, and becoming chargeable on my neigh-

bours. If I were, it would be quite right that I should be made to work. With the exception, therefore, of those things which would interfere with the rights of my neighbours, I feel myself at perfect liberty to do whatsoever my conscience towards God approves.

"So, again, with regard to what is called *religious* liberty. I go to church, because I believe it is according to the law of God; others go to the dissenting meeting-house, and some nowhere at all. In my opinion they are wrong. Still I do not wish to force them by any compulsion to worship God contrary to their own conviction. I do not think that human rulers have a right to do this. Nor do they in England. Therefore I really do not see, gentlemen, in what respect my liberty, or the liberty of any man in England, is interfered with—at least in the manner in which you seem to suppose. To say the truth, I am inclined to think that the fault is on the other side, and that some people have *too much liberty*. It appears to me that persons are left at liberty to do things contrary to the law, which they ought not to be allowed to do. The publication of libels and calumnies in the newspapers, for instance, is a grievous social evil, which ought to be restrained. What can be a greater injury or wrong than to blacken an honest man's character by false representation? or, again, what can be more injurious than when a man, for selfish or interested purposes, misleads those who are not able to judge for themselves on divine

CHAPTER VIII.

The Fruit of Education.

When the man you see,
You find him what you saw the boy would be;
Disguised a little—but we still behold
What pleased and what offended us of old.
Years from the mind no native stain remove,
But lay the varnish of the world above.

CRABBE.

FRANKLIN'S speech at the Civil and Religious Liberty Club was a good deal talked of in the little town of Laxington, where all people were pretty well acquainted with the sayings and doings of their neighbours.

"That's a fine fellow, that son of yours," said Mr. Morton to Joseph Franklin one day; "he does credit to your training."

"You are very good to say so, sir, and I hope it is as you have said. I should be very sorry, however, to see him turn speechifier at public meetings."

"There is no harm in a man having the use of his tongue in these days," said Mr. Morton, "if he employ it discreetly. It is a gift which may be abused, and too often *is* abused; but that is no more than may be said of every other gift which God bestows

on us. It is certain, however, that when guided by good principles, it may be used most effectually for the promotion of the cause of truth. I quite agree with you, however, that speaking is an accomplishment which, in your son's station of life, intended as he is to follow the same business with yourself, it is not at all necessary for him to cultivate ;—better cultivate his turnips and mangel-wurzel."

" Ay, ay," said Franklin, " let every man keep to his own proper line."

Their conversation then turned on the question of liberty. " There is not a more difficult question," said Mr. Morton, " than that of civil and religious liberty. I am not one of those who grudge the English their liberty even on religious grounds. It is their free constitution, curbed as it has been, or modified, by the influence of their Church, which has made the English nation what it is. This it is which has made them, morally considered, the greatest nation in the world. And it is not too much to say, that Englishmen individually have a higher moral tone than other nations. Take an Englishman in any class of life, and he shall be superior, generally speaking, to a man of the same class in other countries. The English gentleman is, in strength of mind and principle, superior to the same class of men all over the world; and the same may be said, or at least might have been said, of other classes up to the conclusion of the last war. The French beat all the nations of Europe, one after another ; and the English

beat the French. The Russian and the German obey orders, and stand well to their ground; but they have not the confidence and self-respect of the Englishman, when called on to act independently. The Frenchman, on the other hand, is individually brave and self-confident, but he lacks the feeling of duty to an external power."

Mr. Franklin. "What you say, sir, reminds me of Nelson's famous signal, 'England expects that every man will do his duty,' which seemed so exactly to hit the feeling of those to whom it was addressed."

Mr. Morton. "Yes, it falls in completely with the spirit which dwells in a true Englishman's breast. There is a singular mixture of *independent action*, and, at the same time, *deference to the call of duty*. Obedience to an external law, joined with confidence in himself when so acting, is the genuine Englishman's character. A want of self-respect as surely leads a man into error, as a want of respect for external law. A too great facility in yielding is one of the greatest blemishes in a man's character. Many a man, situated as your son was the other night, would have been persuaded into joining the club, or have sneaked away without making his protest against its principles when the opportunity was given him. It required an independent self-respecting spirit to do as he did.

"Looking to the highest ground, I do not hesitate to say, that a considerable degree of independence is necessary to complete the true Christian character.

'Add to thy faith *virtue*,' says St. Peter—that is, *manliness*, or determination to act up to that which we believe to be the will of God. It is of no use for a young man to have been instructed in good principles, if he has not the courage and independence of spirit which shall enable him to stick to them; but shall be laughed out of his religious faith, or practice, by a set of giddy associates, or frightened out of them by the fear of man. We are apt to think that the evils of the present day result from liberty run mad, an excess of independence, and refusal to yield to an external law. No doubt, in a great measure they do. At the same time I am disposed to think, that if many are led astray by the spirit of liberty, a *vast proportion also are ruined by the absence of true Christian independence*—the want of firmness to resist what their conscience tells them is wrong. Hundreds of young men are led into immoral, atheistical, licentious courses, from sheer pusillanimity, and not having the spirit to say to their foolish associates, 'I will not do so and so: it is contrary to the law of God: it is contrary to the law of man.'

"The first Christians present a beautiful instance of the just mixture of submission and resistance; when they scrupulously obeyed the civil powers under which God had placed them in all indifferent matters, so as to give no cause of offence; but, with a stern resolution, yielded their bodies to the flames rather than cast a few grains of incense upon an

idol's altar. It was only in what concerned the law of their God that their enemies could find any cause of accusation against them. At the same time, there is great danger of carrying out this spirit of Christian resolution to vicious excess, so as to entirely change its character; or of mistaking a personal obstinacy, and dogged resistance to what is right, for a spirit of Christian resolution. Foolish notions about liberality and independence have got into the heads of people in the present day, which, if they be not checked by God's blessing, will break out into fearful evils before long.

"It does one good, farmer," continued Mr. Morton, grasping his companion's hand, "to see a young fellow like your son; *shewing the true spirit of Christian independence by obedience to the laws of God and man.*"

"He is a good lad," said the worthy farmer, "as any in the country, though his father says it;" and with a tear of pleasure and emotion sparkling in his eyes, he returned the pastor's friendly grasp, and respectfully raised his hat from his manly forehead as they went their different ways.

While the worthy yeoman was thus reaping, in his son's good conduct, the natural harvest of the good principles which he had early instilled, and seeing his son grow up to man's estate, adorning, and at the same time contented with, the station in which God had placed him; very different were the family-scenes which took place at the abode of

our hero, whose breast was filled with the spirit of restless ambition, and guided by no sound or certain principle.

Mr. Lever, senior, dogged as he was, soon experienced the ill effects of the mode in which he had trained his son. Encouraged by his father to dispute with him, instead of yielding to his authority, Charles now began to have the best of the argument, and learned to despise the intellect of his father. John Lever, being vain and opinionative, had no notion of bringing up his son to despise himself—natural as such a result must have appeared to every one else—and was often piqued and angry at finding himself somewhat undutifully foiled in argument. It required all the meekness and amiableness of the mother to keep the son and father from open quarrelling.

When Charles was about twenty, he was elected secretary of the Mechanics' Institute; and soon after his election he delivered a lecture to his fellow-mechanics on "the power of truth over the human mind," which was highly applauded, and extracts made from it in the *Laxington Chronicle*. Charles was not a little puffed up by seeing his production appear in print. He afterwards published an article in the same respectable paper, on "the great advantage of a decimal coinage;" proving most satisfactorily the desirableness of counting by tenpences and tens of tenpences instead of shillings and pounds, but forgetting that it would be the work of a generation

to teach the people in all the towns and villages of England to adopt a different method from that to which they were accustomed, and that they went on very well, and got quite rich enough, with their pounds, shillings, and pence. Encouraged, however, by the approbation of the *Chronicle*, Charles became a frequent correspondent, under the name of "Hampden;" and his lucubrations were actually by some persons attributed to the Whig member for the borough, who, good easy man, was betting at Epsom, or dancing at Almack's, or perhaps snoring on the benches of the House of Commons, dreaming as little of Laxington and its *Chronicle*, as of any other place or thing on the habitable globe. Thus rapidly progressing, our hero became a leading member and speaker in the Laxington Reform Club, where his ready talent and confidence soon established him as a first-rate orator and disputant.

It may be well supposed that the aspiring and ardent mind of one so trained as Charles Lever, and so open to the beguilement of flattery and love of applause, luxuriated not a little in this field for the exhibition of his talent, and that he was well nigh intoxicated with the success which attended his progress as a radical orator: yet was he too shrewd and intelligent to be led away by the fallacies to which he gave utterance. He found it expedient, however, to allow himself in considerable latitude of expression. It was necessary to make bold assertions, without any great regard to truth, or he would

not be listened to. It was necessary to speak strongly against the clergy, and consequently against religion, and to abuse and vilify his opponents; otherwise his speech would have wanted pith and attractiveness in the ears of his coarse listeners. So he was led on to a disregard of truth, and the deliberate utterance of whatsoever calumnies and sophistries his ready invention supplied. Yet often, when he looked around him on his credulous and ignorant audience, and marked the eagerness with which arguments were swallowed, of which even he himself more than suspected the truth, his conscience would whisper to him, that he was not acting an honest or manly part in thus leading others into error, and beguiling them by fallacies; and he would feel that it was ungenerous and wicked to blacken the characters and misrepresent the motives and conduct of his opponents. And often, when he laughed at God's ministers, and was led on to scoff at holy things, the mild instruction of his mother would rise before his mind to reprove and admonish him: but then again the applause which greeted him sounded like music in his ears, and banished the thought of every thing but his own vain-glory and renown.

If Charles could thus detect the sophistries and misrepresentations which he himself uttered, much more readily could he distinguish the same dishonesty in others: and a more intimate acquaintance with the leading agitators and orators of his club

led him soon to view them with suspicion and even dislike; while he forgot that he himself was liable to the same imputation of selfish and sordid motives which he plainly perceived to be actuating the minds of his companions. But he was borne gradually onwards with the stream. Continual listening to and uttering fallacies and false assertions soon obscured the clearness of his judgment, and party-spirit carried him on to lengths, and involved him in schemes, from which, had he contemplated them from the first, he would have shrunk with aversion.

It has been asserted by a radical member of parliament, that it is not the *ignorance*, but the *intelligence* of the lower orders, of which we have most need to be apprehensive; a fact which he supports by the number of good speakers which there are amongst them. But this is a great fallacy: the fact is, that the clever speakers are generally men of the character we have described—half deceivers, half themselves deceived; and that the large majority of the evil-disposed amongst the poorer classes are but blind followers of their designing or enthusiastic leaders. Nothing is so entirely misunderstood and perverted in the present day as the meaning of the word "knowledge." "The people," we are told, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." True; but of what knowledge? Is it for lack of a smattering in the arts and sciences? or of the stores of knowledge contained in newspapers? or the information conveyed through a set of orators, probably more ignorant than those

whom they address, inasmuch as their moral sense is more inveterately and hopelessly depraved? Is it knowledge such as this that is to save the nation? No; it is the knowledge of the truth; the knowledge of the word and will of God; the knowledge how to live soberly, honestly, and godly in this present world, and to obtain an eternal inheritance in the next. *Give them as much of other knowledge as you please; but if you do not give them this, you give them nothing.*

CHAPTER IX.

Reciprocal Influences between different Classes.

Yet governors and govern'd both are blind
To the plain truth, or fling it to the wind;—
If to expedience principle must bow,
Past, future, shrinking up beneath the incumbent now;
If cowardly concession still must feed
The thirst for power in men who ne'er concede;
If generous loyalty must stand in awe
Of subtle treason with his mask of law,
Or with bravado, insolent and hard,
Provoking punishment to win reward;
If office help the faction to conspire,
And they who *should* extinguish, fan the fire;—
Then will the sceptre be a straw; the crown
Sit loosely, like the thistle's crest of down,
To be blown off at will, by power that spares it
In cunning patience, from the head that wears it.

WORDSWORTH.

THE democratic feeling of the town of Laxington, and of our hero himself, was confirmed and increased by a circumstance which will require that we should introduce, for a moment, to our reader's notice certain personages not otherwise connected with our tale, except as they will serve to shew the concatenation of human events, and the remote influences which affect their character.

There is a degree of deference due to those who are put in authority over us, which forbids us to exaggerate their faults, or ridicule their failings. "The

scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works." The task of the moral writer is rendered peculiarly difficult when he is unable to speak well, and may not speak all he thinks, of his rulers. When Mrs. H. More wrote her tale of "Mr. Fantom" (which, by the way, is singularly applicable to the present times), and other tales and tracts which were productive of much good in their day, she had the constituted authorities on the side of truth and religion, and could with a clear conscience not only inculcate obedience to the existing powers, but praise them, in general, as the promoters of what was just and good. But when those in power act systematically and avowedly on principles directly opposed to the laws of God; when magistrates, and those immediately in authority over us, are hostile to God's true Church, and abettors of error and insubordination; and when evil is encouraged and good kept down, even by ministers of state, so that great discouragement is, through their means, given to the Church of God,—the conscientious writer's duty is much embarrassed. He must not flinch from setting before his readers what appears to him one of the principal causes of the evil which abounds; yet must he speak with deference of those who, in his judgment, are liable to this charge, as being men on whom the Providence of God, for His own wise purposes, has conferred present power. The right path seems to be,

to refrain from all exaggeration and ridicule, and to state simple facts. Instead, therefore, of drawing an imaginary scene, which might represent the interior of a cabinet-council in the nineteenth century, I shall briefly set down such circumstances as all may know to be the plain unvarnished truth,—or very like it.

A short time before the period of which we have been writing, there occurred a vacancy in the representation of the populous borough of A——; and it was thought an important object with the ministry of the day to secure it, both because it would add another vote to their waning majority, and also would give them the opportunity of boasting that the intelligent manufacturing population and most important constituencies were with them;—the public being unaccountably blind to the fact, that in very large constituencies the voice of the educated and well-informed part of the community is entirely swamped by the mass of ten-pounders, who, in such places, on account of the high rate of houses, are the lowest of the people; so that, just in proportion to the size of a borough, is likely to be the ignorance and low degree of those who really elect the representatives.

The ministers, anxious to secure the seat, sent one of their number, the Right Hon. Fox Wigley, a member of her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, as candidate on the liberal interest. Mr. Wigley was one of that class of politicians whose opinions, not being based on principle, remain in a

state of doubtfulness and indecision, until they become formed and fixed by circumstances. There were many subjects on which this gentleman had never committed himself one way or the other; and therefore he considered himself at perfect liberty to adopt whichever side suited him best, according to the exigencies of the occasion.

When the liberal candidate arrived at A——, and began to see how matters stood, it was evident that, in the present divided state of public opinion, a sharp contest was likely to take place, and that the result would probably depend on securing the votes of some of the most violent amongst the radicals. Now there lived in the town of A—— a profligate and disreputable sort of electioneering agitator, whose name was Jack Marrat. This man had been prosecuted and punished for bribery at a former election; and in revenge upon the law by which he had so justly suffered, he had become a violent advocate for the ballot, and other democratic innovations generally associated with that question. Jack Marrat was a grand beer-shop orator, and by his violence and impudence had acquired a very considerable influence with the lowest set of electors in the town; who, besides their own votes, which were numerous, might, if they were engaged heartily in the cause, alarm and keep back some of the more timid of the conservative voters from the poll. Now Mr. Fox Wigley had never hitherto fully expressed his sentiments on the ballot. His mind was just in

that state with regard to it, that if it should be of importance to his interests, he might easily be induced to become its advocate; nay, even in the last session, when the ballot-question was brought forward by the gentleman who usually brings it forward, Mr. Wigley, though he voted against it, had at the same time expressed an opinion that, if Tory influence was exercised as it had been hitherto, he was not sure whether he himself might not be a convert to the opinion of the honourable mover. Though little notice was taken of these expressions at the time, yet, as it happened, they proved most fortunate; for they enabled the right honourable gentleman, without any great inconsistency, to appear on the hustings at A—— a decided advocate for the ballot, and to give most satisfactory answers to the questions there put to him by Mr. Marrat. Nor must it be supposed that the honourable privy councillor was insincere in his expression of opinion; for he was a man of that sort of mind which is apt to be strongly biassed by interest; and he soon reasoned and talked himself into a very ardent and decided supporter of the measure. *Alas! what weak unstable creatures are we, if we act from policy, and not from principle!* Mark the process by which the patrician mind, and, in many respects, really able and cultivated intellect of the right honourable privy councillor, imbibed his democratic opinions. Mr. Wigley received them as it were by inoculation from Jack Marrat, the pot-house orator of A——, the convicted of bribery;

and having so received them, he cherished and argued upon them until they became part and parcel of his political creed, and by him were transferred into the cabinet itself. From thenceforth the ballot became an open question. Instead of setting their faces against it, as they had done hitherto, it was determined that the members of the government should oppose or support it according to their respective consciences ;—that is, accordingly as they had or had not such persons as Mr. Marrat influential members of their respective constituencies.

But what, it will be asked, has the story of Jack Marrat and the right honourable Mr. Fox Wigley to do with the little town of Laxington? Just this : —after a while the electors of A—— became tired of Mr. Wigley for their member, and he received several very intelligible hints that it was time for him to look out for another seat. At this juncture an opportunity enabled him to become candidate for Laxington, into which place he imported all his ultra-democratic opinions respecting the ballot, and other measures, which, though they were a step beyond the general feeling even of the liberals of Laxington, yet being supported by government authority and patronage, and enforced by the eloquence of the honourable candidate, acquired a weight and influence which they had not possessed before ; and Laxington made a decided movement in radicalism.

Thus it is that the different classes act reciprocally on each other in their downward progress.

Thus are opinions conveyed from the beer-shop to the privy council, thence to the floor of the House of Commons or the hustings, and so the infection is spread through the nation. Nothing more tends to confound in men's minds the boundaries of right and wrong than the dishonest compromises made by candidates at elections. Even conservatives, to catch a few dissenting votes, will sacrifice the most important principles of the Church. Nor is a remedy likely to be found, until some master-mind stands forth, who shall take the ground of high principle and no compromise, and so rally around him the real strength and good feeling of the nation; or, in default of some such master-spirit, until the great body of stanch Churchmen and true conservatives shall learn to act together on unflinching and consistent principles. Meanwhile the true consolation of all good men is, the remembrance that God's sacred word is pledged to save and defend His Church, and that He is able to control the wills and affections of sinful men, and mould them to His purpose, so that by His inscrutable Providence good is brought out of evil.

Thus, even now, it may be plainly seen that God's true Church, deserted by the arm of human power, is putting forth her real strength, and bids fair to do more by her present independent exertions for the extension of God's kingdom, than when she rested on the broken reed of human authority, and trusted to man rather than to God.

But I am wandering from my more immediate subject, which was the Laxington election. Before stating, however, what took place on this occasion, let me say a few words on the subject of elections in general.

In the better times of English history an election was a very different thing from what it is at present. Rightly viewed, it is an opportunity afforded by our free constitution to those possessed of a stake in the country to send up to parliament such persons as are, in their judgment, best qualified to advise the sovereign as to the measures proper to be taken for the good government of the empire, "so that all things may be ordered and settled upon the best and surest foundation; that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations." Of course, heats and animosities were likely to spring up even in the best days, when elections were contested, and would give rise to tricks and dishonesty, or even violence. But these things did not formerly go to such lengths as to vitiate the population. Popular elections, though not without their evils at any time, were, on the whole, a salutary excitement to the community, which might otherwise have stagnated, and served to remind men of their various duties and responsibilities as members of a free state.

During the last century, elections came to be rather the struggles of different factions in the state; —a change which, together with the detestable system of patronage, is amongst the legacies which we have

received from the miscalled *glorious* revolution. In a large majority of cases, however, the contest took place between two neighbouring commoners of respectability; and the personal merits or family-interests of the candidates were more thought of than any difference of political opinion. Blue and orange, pink and green, the badges of the respective candidates, were the rallying words of the parties, with little reference to the principles of which they were symbols. In fact, the political principles of the English aristocracy and gentry were pretty nearly of the same character, even in different factions.

But now, as at the time immediately previous to the great rebellion, we have come to a war of principles. Each borough and county is a field of battle, on which the great principles of good or evil, of order or disorder, of truth or error, are contested. Though the parties in the state are still but factions struggling for power, the weapons which they use are no longer the innoxious influence of family-connexion, but the awful principles of good and evil, on which the destinies of the world depend.

Hence the exceeding violence and animosity, hence the disgraceful chicanery and fraud, with which modern elections are accompanied. The political franchise is no longer a wholesome stimulus to a community in danger of stagnation, but an occasion of increased excitement to a nation already overcharged with inflammable matter. This excessive excitement calls forth, by natural consequence, every effort which

can be made, whether lawful or unlawful, honourable or dishonourable, Christian or unchristian. And a contested election is too often the scene of "hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, envyings, (even) murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like;" of the which holy Scripture tells us emphatically, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Alas! if we proceed and set down the following verse, which describes the "fruits of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,"[1] and then ask where are they to be found in a contested election, it sounds almost like irreverence!

The evil influence, which the present mode of conducting a contested election works on the moral character of the individuals engaged in it will be shewn more fully from the example of the town of Laxington.

We will not speak of the frauds practised during the previous year at the registration; we will let those pass, and go at once to the election itself. The candidates for Laxington, at the time of which we are speaking, were the Right Hon. Fox Wigley and Sir John Oldacre, bart.; the latter, a stanch Tory of the old school; the former, as we have already seen, connected with the administration of the day, and far gone in the principles of radicalism. Mr. Wigley stood on the interest of his relative,

[1] Galatians v.

Lord Foxstone, who, though one of the most violent denouncers of rotten boroughs, contrived, with a little manœuvering, to keep the borough of Laxington out of schedule A; well knowing that its political value would be enhanced tenfold when rotten boroughs were scarce.

The election came on rather suddenly, and all hands were put in immediate requisition. Lawyers were to be retained; inns and public-houses to be engaged; voters to be looked up; and the question, who was the fitted person to represent the borough, was to be decided by dint of eating and drinking, speechifying, bribing, and intimidation. I do not mean that there were not honest and conscientious voters on each side; but these being about equal, the question turned chiefly on the above-named practices. Partisans were eagerly purchased at their respective prices. The greedy and covetous were bribed; the guzzlers and drunkards were treated; the vain were flattered and talked over. The general feeling amongst the middle classes in Laxington was conservative; but conservatism without a higher principle is a feeble safeguard of virtue. The influence of Lord Foxstone, skilfully managed, was found enough to corrupt the integrity of many. One man was brought over by the reduction of his rent from fifteen to twelve pounds; another by the promise that his house should be repaired; another by the threat that he should lose a quarter of an acre of land, which was convenient to him as a garden;

another, who had promised his vote to the opposite party, hired himself and his horse, on the day of election, to take a blank letter some ten or twelve miles off; another was allowed a day's shooting in Lord Foxstone's preserves. Such were the mean and discreditable manœuvres by which independent Englishmen were brought over to desert their party and vote against their principles. And what is still more degrading, men calling themselves honourable and liberal, nay, even occupying the rank of gentlemen, were induced, it is to be feared, by similar interested motives, to be agents in these paltry affairs.

Charles Lever was easily caught by an appeal to his vanity. Having, as we have seen, considerable influence among the working classes, it was deemed important by the liberals to secure his active co-operation. He was introduced personally to the liberal candidate, who took him by the hand, and led him aside — talked to him of his prospects, whispered confidentially in his ear, and sent him away highly gratified with his attentions, and resolved to go through thick and thin to serve him. Thenceforth Charles Lever became one of the most active and zealous of Mr. Wigley's committee.

Whatsoever scruples of conscience he may have had as to the honesty of the various businesses in which he was engaged, they were easily got over by the sweeping maxim that "all things were fair at elections." Lever forgot, like many others, that there is no great merit in being honest or peaceable

when there is no temptation to be otherwise: the test of honesty or self-denial is, when some valued object is to be promoted by the contrary. But Lever, encouraged by his betters, cared little as to the means, when the end in view was likely to be promoted; and, whether it was to convey a bribe to one voter, or a threat to another; to help in making one elector drunk, or flatter another's wife or daughter, in all these things clever Charley was perfectly at home. I suppose neither he nor his employer, nor the host of underlings and committee-men, ever once thought of the solemn text of Scripture, "What doth it profit, if a man gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Besides the demoralizing effects of these mere private matters of business in which Lever was employed, there were other causes in operation which tended to the same evil effects. The liberal candidate and his friends were, of course, in the habit of making frequent speeches; and the main topic of their addresses was, to puff up the illiterate mob, who stood open-mouthed, and ready to swallow all they chose to administer, with a high notion of their vast intelligence, virtue, and independence; and to inspire them with feelings of animosity and contempt for the persons and principles of their opponents. The more respectable people in the town, being Tories, were abused and vilified. The clergy were denounced as bigots; the dissenters lauded as liberals. The orators, on these occasions, never once

considered that they were infusing principles into the minds of their hearers, which would make them turbulent and evil members of society; and what was infinitely worse, would excite in them a spirit of hostility against God's Church, and the ministers whom He had appointed to teach them, and so endanger the salvation of their souls. On the eternal misery which perhaps they were entailing on many of their easily duped hearers, they never once reflected, but only considered what was likely to serve their turn, and win the election. So utterly subversive is political excitement in the hearts of men of all feelings of pity for the souls of others, or concern for their own.

Lever was partly the dupe, partly the agent of these proceedings. Filled with a high notion of his own importance, and of the ignorance and bigotry of his betters, carried on by the excitement to deeds of which in his cooler moments he would have been ashamed, he became in his turn the orator of the beer-shop, and the means of conveying the same notions and principles to those in a station immediately below him.

It is not necessary that we should detail at length all the circumstances of the election. Suffice it to say that, as in most cases of a hard run, it was won by the liberals. A row was got up about the hustings on the day of election, encouraged by the liberal magistrates, and several lukewarm and timid conservatives were thereby kept from voting; three

others were made drunk, and locked up by Lever in a barn until the election was over. Through these and other similar creditable manœuvres, the Hon. Fox Wigley was returned by a majority of five. The return was of course petitioned against, on the score of intimidation and illegal practices, but a majority of the members of the committee being liberals, the evidence was thought not to be conclusive, and Mr. Wigley was reported as "duly elected." The only consolation which the other party received being the unanimous decision of the committee, that the petition against the return had *not* been frivolous and vexatious.

So ended the Laxington election.

CHAPTER X.

Disappointments begin.

O how this spring of love resembleth
Th' uncertain glory of an April-day,
Which now shews all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away.
SHAKSPEARE: *The two Gentlemen of Verona.*

BUT the life of man cannot all pass in excitement, at least in excitement of one kind. The angry feelings of the election soon passed away. The triumph of one party, and the disappointment of the other, were soon forgotten; and Laxington relapsed into its usual tranquillity.

We must now return to our honest friend the farmer. The house in which farmer Franklin lived, and which, by the way, was his own property, was just one of the prettiest places in the county. It was an old mansion, half of wood and half of brick, with several old gables without, and a number of odd old rooms and passages within, in which you might have almost lost yourself. But all these old places were in such beautiful order, and the old house was so comfortably roofed and weather-tight and kept in such thorough repair, and the apricot and pear-trees and jasmines were trained so carefully on the walls and taught to wander in such graceful festoons about the old

stone windows, that it was the very pattern of picturesque comfort. The house looked upon a clear small river, which flowed calmly onward, without noise or haste, at once fertilizing and adorning the valley through which it passed. On one side, in a bend of the stream, at the distance of about half a mile, the eye rested on a water-mill, the wheel of which went busily round, whitening the pool with foam. About half a mile further on was the old tower and town of Laxington, standing on a gentle eminence, which served to relieve the uniformity of the outline.

So noted was farmer Franklin's house for the extreme loveliness of its situation, that people from the town would continually walk out with their friends to see it, and were always sure to meet with a courteous welcome from the worthy farmer. The best time to visit Rickerscote Grange was on a calm summer evening, when the business of the day was over, and the farmer's dairy cows, four-and-twenty in number, of the finest Durham breed, were wending slowly from the pastures to yield their rich stores of milk. It is difficult to say whether the agriculturist or the artist viewed the scene with the greatest delight.

But it was not the calm still river, nor the cheerful mill, nor the distant tower, nor the twenty-four Durham kine, nor the jasmines and apricots clinging to the old gabled farmhouse, nor even the farmer himself with his ruddy cheek and cheerful brow, which formed the chief attraction at Rickerscote Grange.

There was another object more beautiful than them all. Farmer Franklin had a daughter, who was a few years younger than his son George,—a nice, modest, unaffected, warm-hearted girl as any in the country round. To a fine face and figure Margaret Franklin joined a gracefulness and elegance of mind and character, which, though perhaps less frequent, is far from being uncommon in her station.

Margaret had lost her mother some years previously; and her father, though a plain farmer, had all the dignity of a man of high and upright principle. A man who behaves consistently with his station, whatever it may be, is never vulgar: it is your upstart, conceited person, who pretends to a higher station than is his due, or the low-minded person, who affects the society and manners of those who are beneath him, who fall into vulgarity. Farmer Franklin and his family were free from these errors, and kept the even tenor of their way in the station in which God had placed them, neither envying the great nor despising the poor: and hence Margaret acquired that grace and loveliness which naturally spring from an artless, chaste, and unaffected heart.

Charles Lever saw and admired his fair cousin. He admired her character as well as her person,—for it often happens that those who are blind to their own defects can discern beauty and worth in others. The neighbourhood of farmer Franklin's house to the town, and the relationship which existed between them, as well as his former intimacy with her brother,

gave Charles Lever opportunities of cultivating the acquaintance of Margaret, of which he was not slow to avail himself. He took a sudden fancy for fishing, and easily obtained, through the means of his friend, permission to troll in the river which skirted the farm; and being well aware that he was not a favourite with the farmer, he contrived to make his fishing-excursions on the market-days, when he knew the worthy man was absent from home; so that his intimacy with Margaret, who received him on friendly terms, as the schoolboy-companion of her brother, had proceeded to considerable lengths before her father was aware of it. However, these things are sure to transpire sooner or later. Farmer Franklin came home one day from market rather earlier than usual, and was surprised to find a fishing-rod resting against the rails of the little garden in front of the house. Proceeding onwards, he heard voices, and perceived his daughter and Charles Lever in the porch; the former sitting on the seat, the latter leaning against the pillar, and both so much interested in the conversation which was going on between them, that they did not observe the farmer approach. A beautiful jack was lying at Margaret's feet, which had evidently just been taken from the water.

"How now, young man!" said Franklin. "So—I am glad to see you have had some sport. I dare say you will catch another like it, if you do not waste your time."

Charles took the farmer's hint, that his visit was

not altogether agreeable; and after rather a confused answer, and a request that he would accept the fish which he had just caught (a request, however, which the farmer at once declined), he abruptly took his leave. Franklin looked earnestly at his daughter, whose downcast eyes betokened an equal embarrassment.

"Has Charles Lever been here before to fish, Margaret?" said he.

"Yes, father," answered the artless girl, "several times."

"Then let me beg you will not allow him to come again—at least, if he does come, that you will not favour him with your company."

This was said in rather a stern voice, which was quite unusual with Franklin in speaking to his daughter. The tears began to flow freely from Margaret's eyes, betraying too clearly how keenly she felt both the manner and the subject of her father's address. The good man at once discerned that her feelings were wounded; and though he grieved to see her so much affected, and feared that matters had gone farther than he was aware, yet he resolved at once to speak kindly as well as plainly to his daughter, as he always had done.

"My dear Margaret," said he, taking her hand affectionately in his, "I know more of that young man's character than you do. If there were no other objection, I should be much grieved to see my daughter the wife of one who professed himself a dissenter

from the Church. You, Margaret, I am sure, will never leave the Church in which you have been born and bred."

"No, I will not indeed, dear father," sobbed Margaret.

"Consider then, daughter, how painful and distressing it would be not to worship God with your husband, but to be obliged to look upon him as one who continually sinned against God, and despised His ministers. Then again, what is to become of your children? how are they to be educated? are they to be brought up as Dissenters? or, if they are to be trained in the Church, how painfully must they regard their father's schism, when they are old enough to be aware of its sinfulness. In short, I can see nothing but unhappiness and misery in a true Church-woman, as I trust you are, being connected in marriage with a Dissenter."

Poor Margaret could answer nothing to this appeal of her father. Though her heart was certainly more interested about Charles than she was aware, yet, as he had never spoken of marriage, she had not seriously put to herself the questions which her father now proposed, and the difficulties which stood in the way of their union had never occurred to her.

"But," continued her father, "I fear that young Lever is not even a Dissenter. He associates with a set of young men who have very loose notions indeed about religion; and I understand he is as bad as any of them. He is a violent radical, and a leader

in every thing that is lawless and bad. In short, dear Margaret, he is not worthy of you; his whole feelings and principles are entirely different from those in which it was the pride of your excellent mother, and in which, since she went to her rest, it has been my anxious desire, to train you. For your own happiness, therefore, as well as out of regard for the memory of your sainted mother, and, let me add, out of love for your father, I beg that you will give no further encouragement to this young man."

Margaret was sadly distressed and almost ready to faint away, being bewildered with conflicting emotions; for though nothing like an engagement of any sort had passed between her and Charles, yet, it must be confessed, she had been pleased with his attention and captivated with his clever conversation; and he, of course, well knowing her purity of mind and high principle, had studiously refrained from saying or doing any thing which would shock or offend her. But the serious and affectionate tone of her father, and the perfect reliance which she placed in him, joined with the arguments which he had used, placed obstacles in the way of any further correspondence with Charles Lever which she felt were likely to be insuperable.

The rest of the day and the night following were spent in bitter tears, not without earnest prayer to Almighty God to guide and support her. Her good sense, and habit of dutiful obedience, aided by a

higher power, soon enabled her to adopt the resolution which alone was consistent with her happiness; and the following morning she announced of her own accord to her father that she was ready then, as at all times, to comply with his wishes; and that thenceforth she would avoid the company of Charles Lever, unless her father should see cause to take off his interdict.

CHAPTER XI.

The Stranger.

For he'd a way that many judged polite,
A cunning dog—he'd fawn before he'd bite.
CRABBE.

Not long after the occurrences related in the foregoing chapter, a stranger arrived at Laxington one afternoon by the Birmingham coach. He put up at the Britannia, and announced his intention of staying probably some days. The stranger was a thin pale man, between thirty and forty. His outward appearance was respectable—his countenance intelligent, though at times forbidding. The emaciation of his cheek might have been the result of studious habits, or of dissipation; and there was an occasional sternness of expression which indicated deep thought either of good or evil.

Soon after his arrival, the stranger walked out into the town, and, passing along the street, arrived at a bookseller's shop. Here he paused, and looked at the name over the door, then at the books in the window. He seemed dissatisfied, and disposed to pass on; but after proceeding a few paces, and looking up and down the street, he returned and entered the shop.

The bookseller, an intelligent elderly man, bowed politely, and awaited the stranger's business.

"I presume, Mr. Johnson," said the stranger, "that you are a printer as well as a bookseller?"

Mr. Johnson answered in the affirmative.

"Have you much business of that sort on your hands at present?"

"Have not printed a line this week, sir. Sometimes orders come in pretty thick, so that I can hardly answer them; at other times I scarcely know how to find work for my men."

"Well," said the stranger, "I suppose you can strike off for me five hundred handbills like this."

And he placed in Mr. Johnson's hands an old bill, which he desired to have copied, with the exception that the name of Laxington was to be substituted for that of the place where it had been printed. It was to the effect, that Mr. Scipio Suttle had arrived in the town, and proposed to deliver a course of lectures on Socialism, at which he invited the inhabitants of Laxington to favour him with their attendance. Now Mr. Johnson was an honest, as well as an inquiring man. In the course of his business some of the publications of the Socialists had come into his hands, and he had just read enough of them to induce him to put them into the fire, for fear some of the members of his family, or his apprentices, should get hold of them. He no sooner cast his eyes over Mr. Suttle's handbill, than he put it back with some warmth:

"I must decline having any thing to do with it, sir," said he: "I have read some of the publications of the Socialists, and have found them full of blasphemy and immorality."

"You are uncharitable, sir," said the Socialist coolly.

"Uncharitable, sir!" said Mr. Johnson, his honest indignation rising as he spoke, "do you call it charity to disseminate principles which will rob men of their religion, and make them worse than beasts? No, sir, if I had fifty men out of work, I would not print your handbill: I should be ashamed to see my name at the bottom of it."

"You will not get rich in your business, I take it, sir, if you give way to such foolish scruples. Somebody else will print it, I dare say, if you will not.—Here, friend," said he to a fellow who was lounging with his back against a post close to Mr. Johnson's door, "can you tell me of any other printer in the town?"

"First turn to the right," said the other, motioning with his head, but without taking his hands out of his pockets.

The Socialist followed the directions given him, and soon arrived at another bookseller's shop, in the window of which lay copies of *The Laxington Chronicle*, *The True Sun*, *The Weekly Despatch*, and other printed papers of the same character.

Mr. Grabbet, whose shop the lecturer now entered, was not so scrupulous as his neighbour; all

was fish which came to his net. His only question was, whether he should be paid for his work; and being satisfied on this important point, he readily undertook to print the handbills, and entered at once into the Socialist's views.

"What hour shall we name, sir? shall we say six o'clock?"

"Half-past would be better," answered the Socialist; "the men will then have left their work."

"True," said Grabbet; "and the place—have you engaged a room?"

"I intend to lecture in the town-hall," said Suttle.

The printer opened his eyes with some expression of doubtfulness.

"You have obtained permission from the mayor, I suppose, sir?"

"No," answered the other; "but I soon shall. Where does his worship live?"

The printer gave Mr. Suttle the direction; and a few minutes brought that gentleman to the door of the mayor's house, at which he knocked with a sufficiently consequential rap.

His worship had just dined, and was digesting his food in an arm-chair, when Mr. Suttle was announced.

"I believe, sir," said the Socialist, bowing with an air of perfect self-possession, "I believe, sir, you are acquainted with Mr. Hare, of A——, who has

lately been appointed by the government to the registrarship-general of that place."

"I have that honour, certainly," said the mayor.

"Mr. Hare obtained his appointment through the interest of Mr. Fox Wigley, the member for this borough, with whom, also, you are doubtless acquainted."

The mayor began to look interested, as Mr. Suttle continued:

"My friend Mr. Hare is president of the Socialist lodge in A——, and has favoured me with a letter of introduction, which I now take the liberty of presenting to you."

Now it so happened that Mr. Gapes, the mayor of Laxington, had himself an eye to a government-appointment which was likely soon to be vacant in that place; and it at once flashed upon his mind, that if the government, on the recommendation of Mr. Wigley, had appointed the president of the Socialist lodge at A—— to the registrarship, he should not be injuring his own chance by paying due attention to Mr. Hare's Socialist friend. He therefore assumed a very cordial manner, begged Mr. Suttle to be seated, and when that gentleman opened the subject of his visit, and requested the use of the town-hall, he at once assented.

"Oh, certainly," said he, "by all manner of means. We want some information on these things at Laxington:—getting rather dullish. For my part, I am for free inquiry, march of intellect, and so forth.

I go to church myself; but, says I, let's hear what every one has to say; I'm for good-will and charity to all men."

Mr. Suttle's pale countenance was illumined with a slight smile, in which any one but the thick-headed liberal would have discerned the most ineffable contempt. But the mayor was entirely free from any notion of the sort, and felt no doubt that he had won the good opinion of the Socialist by his truly liberal sentiments.

"I hope," said the Socialist, "we shall be able to secure a good audience."

"Why, as to that," answered the mayor, "I am not so sure. You see, sir, we have a good many Tories and illiberal Church-people in this place, who cannot easily be got to stir in such things; however, I think we can manage to make up a snug party. I have no doubt the members of the reform club will make a point of attending; and I will send my own apprentices, and get my friends to do the same."

Thus did they arrange the matter in the most satisfactory manner. We need not record the rest of the conversation which passed between them; but only beg the reader to observe the concatenation of events. It was owing to the good offices of the mayor that the Socialist obtained the use of the town-hall for his meeting. The good offices of the mayor were afforded in consequence of the appointment of his friend Mr. Hare to the registrarship at A——. The appointment of Mr. Hare to the registrarship was

made by the Right Hon. Fox Wigley, member of her Majesty's most honourable privy council; that gentleman having determined to make another attempt to secure the representation of A——, and being anxious to obtain the support of so influential a man as the president of the Socialist lodge.

Thus unconsciously was the thoughtless liberal doing the work of Satan, and prostituting his talent and station to the vilest uses. And thus, in the selfish pursuit of power, was he spreading abroad the most pestilent doctrines of anarchy and atheism, and contributing to ruin the souls of hundreds of his fellow-men.

CHAPTER XII.

The Lectures.

Forth steps the spruce philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs
And principles; of causes, how they work
By necessary laws their sure effect;
Of action and reaction: he has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart and banish fear.
Thou fool! will thy discovery of the cause
Suspend th' effect, or heal it? COWPER.

In consequence principally of the mayor's exertions, the attendance at the first lecture was tolerably good in point of numbers. As Mr. Gapes had predicted, the Tories and Churchmen set their faces against it, with the exception of a few inconsiderate persons who went from curiosity, forgetting that their presence would contribute to give credit and sanction to the Socialist. But as the Tories generally kept away from the lecture, so the liberals, from party-spirit, took it up more warmly, and attended in considerable numbers.

After a good deal of time had been spent in expectation, Mr. Scipio Suttle entered the room through a side-door, accompanied by the mayor and other leading persons of the liberal party, in high good humour, laughing and talking with them in the most

friendly manner. The gentlemen having duly disposed themselves on the platform, the lecturer was presented to the company by Mr. Gapes the mayor, who informed them that Mr. Suttle had been very highly recommended to him by a particular friend, in whom he placed the greatest confidence. The gentleman was come, he said, to explain to them the principles of some new discoveries recently made by the philanthropic Mr. Owen in moral and political science. He, for his part, did not profess to be acquainted with the nature of these discoveries, but had no doubt that they would prove highly interesting to the company assembled. Thus, on the authority of this dolt-headed mayor, whose business was "to execute justice *and to maintain truth*," a person was introduced to Laxington as some lecturer on science, whose true object was to sow the seeds of infidelity, and ruin the souls of those who were unfortunate or imprudent enough to listen to him.

Mr. Suttle began by assuring the company how flattered he was by their attendance, and satisfied of their discernment. True it was that in some quarters Socialism had been most uncharitably misrepresented; but he was quite sure that, from the company now assembled, he should meet with an enlightened hearing; and even should they not coincide with his views, still he had no doubt of their kind and candid indulgence. The system of which he was the humble advocate was one which bespoke the favour of all liberal and enlightened persons. He would at once

state that its real object was *to do all possible good to every man, woman, and child, of whatsoever nation, religion, or colour, in the world.* Here the lecturer received, as he had calculated, a round of applause. What truly liberal and charitable sentiments! "every man, woman, and *child!*" Not even children omitted from his comprehensive scheme! "of every nation, religion, and *colour* too!" Here was liberality!

Mr. Suttle calculated largely on the gullibility of his hearers, and was not disappointed. It did not occur to these candid ladies and gentlemen, that never was scheme, the most absurd and ruinous, concocted by fraud or avarice, which was not intended for the benefit of all who embarked in it: even the South-Sea bubble was to have made the fortune of all those unhappy persons whom it eventually ruined.

The lecturer, encouraged by his reception, went on to expatiate on the sad state of society which at present existed; the number of poor who were doomed to workhouses; of criminals torn from their homes, or executed for crimes into which they had been led by circumstances entirely beyond their control. The plan which he advocated was intended peaceably and orderly to change the whole face of human society,—to surround the rising generation with a train of circumstances which would develop all the noblest faculties of their mental and physical organization. These hard words, it should be observed, were put in with a view to mystify the hearers, and make them believe that the lecturer was a man of

science and philosophy. He went on to say, that the great originator of this scheme, the noble-minded and admirable Robert Owen, had already received the highest encouragement in his philanthropical labours, having been presented by the prime minister himself to her most gracious majesty Queen Victoria.

Such were the principal topics of his first lecture; and, amongst much absurdity, it contained also much painful truth. We have no need, however, of the information of Mr. Owen, or any infidel lecturer, to tell us that there is much of sin and misery in the existing state of society; but we do need to have impressed on our minds again and again, that which the lecturer altogether neglected to allude to—namely, that God Himself has provided a scheme whereby all this sin and misery may be remedied—even the BLESSED GOSPEL OF HIS SON JESUS CHRIST; and that in just the same proportion as its holy principles are infused into mankind, and by no other means which can be invented, will their moral state be purified and amended.

The next lecture was more numerously attended even than the former. For as Mr. Suttle had not broached any thing positively blasphemous or immoral, some who had at first declined, now gave their attendance. Mr. Suttle began, as usual, with high eulogiums on the candour and liberality of his hearers, and assured them, had he not been convinced that they partook of these qualities in an eminent degree, he should not have ventured to state

that which he was now about to lay before them. Dilating again very forcibly on the great misery and suffering which existed, he said that there were three things which, beyond all others, were the principal causes of those evils,—viz., *Religion, Private Property, and Marriage!* Here the lecturer paused. He had made a bold step: hitherto he had crept on stealthily, like a tiger, feeling his way as he went; but now he made a spring forward, and appeared before his astonished audience in his full dimensions. A great many of the company laughed heartily at the announcement, thinking it was a good joke, and that the lecturer intended them to laugh. Others, however, did not view it in that light. One worthy gentleman rose from his seat, and raising his voice above the rest, exclaimed, "Mr. Mayor, if these are the doctrines which this gentleman has to teach us, I think the less we hear of them the better." Unfortunately the speaker was a Churchman and a Conservative, and a party-feeling immediately rose against him. The Mayor said that he hoped gentlemen would allow Mr. Suttle to explain his views, and then they might judge of them, and answer them if they pleased; but it was irregular to interrupt the lecturer. Thus, by the interference of the Mayor, backed by the party-feeling of the assembly, the true moment for turning the lecturer out of the hall was lost; and, instead of that, the gentleman who had appealed to the Mayor, with two or three others, left the meeting.

Mr. Suttle now felt his advantage. Having been allowed to vent such monstrous doctrines without rebuke, nothing which he could afterwards say was likely to shock the ears of his audience. He went on in the usual course which such persons adopt, speaking of Christianity as only one form of religion, amongst Mahometanism, Buddhism, and others,—omitting to state that the Christian religion alone rested on incontrovertible proof, that it was a revelation from God himself—venting the most atrocious blasphemies, yet clothing them with such subtle language, that they appeared most liberal and reasonable: thus filling his unfortunate hearers with doubts and scruples which had never entered into their heads before, and would leave a sting behind perhaps till their dying day. He concluded this day's lecture by announcing that on the following evening he should have the honour of addressing them on the delicate subject of marriage; yet he trusted that he should be able to explain the whole to them in such terms as need not raise a blush on the face of the most modest female.

On the third day the hall was crowded to suffocation,—though it is fair to say that several of the most respectable amongst the Whig ladies kept away with their families. I shall not repeat the evening's lecture: suffice it to say, that the Socialist denounced the pure and holy union of Christian marriage as a source of multiplied evil—declared that nature and inclination ought to be the sole arbitrators of the

connexion between the sexes:—and all these impurities and blasphemies were listened to by a large portion of the Laxington community, females as well as men, under the sanction and authority of the worshipful the Mayor!

CHAPTER XIII.

The Socialist rebuffed.

Avaunt all specious pliancy of mind
In men of low degree; . . . . . .
. . . . . , and be then joined
Patience and temperance with high reserve;
Honour that knows the path, and will not swerve;
Affections which, if put to proof, are kind;
And piety towards God. Such men of old
Were England's native growth.

WORDSWORTH.

It was not likely that Mr. Gapes and his liberal friends—those at least amongst them who were well to do in the world—should attend very seriously to the doctrines of the Socialist. People who live comfortably, and have enough and to spare, however liberal they may be, do not much like the notion of community of goods, or equality with those below them. Their fault was in listening to the lectures at all. They went to hear them partly from spite to the Tories and Churchmen, partly from very blameable curiosity, partly from want of principle. And having been disaffected, low-principled, and lax in their notions before, they remained much the same afterwards. They talked about the lectures as they would have talked about an exhibition of the improved solar microscope, as conveying to them ideas

which had not entered into their heads before. I do not mean that some even of the better sort of liberals may not have received serious injury from the lectures. If any of them had pious and reverential feelings with regard to God and His revealed religion, it could not fail but that cold sarcasms and impudent cavils, patiently listened to, must have had an evil effect upon their minds.

But it was chiefly to the poor uninstructed members of the Laxington community that the Socialist's addresses were most prejudicial. In fact, it was for them mainly that the lectures were intended. The anxiety of the lecturer to obtain a respectable audience was principally on account of the *éclat* which their presence would give, without great expectation of making any converts among them. But he well knew that in a town like Laxington, not yet entirely demoralised, the poorer classes take their tone very much from their betters, and are not apt to listen to any thing which they see despised by those above them. Therefore, while the better kind of liberals who had been foolish enough to attend the lectures were rather amused than convinced, and were quite unconscious of having been influenced by them; many of the poor took it all for serious truth, and were easily induced by Mr. Suttle to form a branch-association for the promotion of social principles.

In this affair Mr. Suttle occupied himself for some time, and had no reason to complain of his

want of success. He soon raised subscriptions enough to open a room for permanent lectures. Secretaries, treasurers, and deputy-lecturers, were appointed; these offices being used as a sort of bait to catch some of the more busy, vain, and talkative, who liked bustle and display. With the exception of these, the association consisted principally of the poorest and most illiterate of the people. Meanwhile, emboldened by his success at the town-hall, and the countenance of the liberal Mayor, Mr. Suttle felt himself quite at ease amongst the people of Laxington, and did not fail to introduce himself and his opinions wherever he found opportunity.

It was market-day—the principal business was over—and a party of honest farmers was assembled at the Britannia, prepared to do justice to a magnificent round of beef and other viands which were placed on the table. At this moment the waiter entered the room, and announced to the company that a gentleman who had been staying in the house for some days would, with their kind permission, do himself the honour of joining their party.

"O, by all means," said farmer Franklin; "I am sure we shall be most happy to accommodate the gentleman. Who is he? What's his name?"

"His name," said the waiter, "is Mr. Suttle: he is a gentleman who has been lecturing in the town-hall for several evenings, with the permission of the Mayor."

Joseph Franklin was standing at the head of the

table — the place usually assigned to him — and was just about to say grace; but no sooner had he heard the announcement of the waiter, than his purpose appeared to undergo a sudden change—he very deliberately threw himself back into the oaken arm-chair, and desired the waiter to send his master. The absence of the waiter gave the company an opportunity of conferring together; and there was but one opinion among them as to the proper course to be pursued. In a few minutes the landlord entered the room with an inquiring countenance.

"Mr. Boniface," said the farmer, "I understand that a person of the name of Suttle is coming to dine here."

"If you have no objection, sir," said the landlord, "he will do himself that honour."

"I am astonished," said Franklin, "that you should think of proposing such a thing; if, as I understand, he is the same person who has been preaching blasphemy and immorality at the town-hall."

"He has certainly been delivering a course of lectures on Socialism," said the landlord; "but I can assure you, sir, you will find him a perfect gentleman. He has been several days in the house, and really his conversation is most interesting—I may say instructive. Indeed, Mrs. Boniface is quite fascinated with him."

"All I can say, Mr. Boniface," said the farmer, "and I speak for these gentlemen as well as myself,

is this,—that if Mr. Suttle dines here, he may dine alone. We have made up our minds not to sit down at table with a person of his principles."

The landlord looked rather abashed at this intimation, and muttered something about charity and liberality.

"As to charity and liberality, and all that stuff, don't let us hear any more about it. I need not tell you, Mr. Boniface, or any other person here present, that if Mr. Suttle were really in want of a dinner, I should be as ready as any one to share mine with him; but I am much mistaken if he is not paid pretty handsomely for his precious lectures, and is quite able to pay for his dinner himself. The plain question is, whether we will countenance a man of his principles by admitting him to our company, and expose ourselves to the danger of his conversation. I have only to repeat, what I said before, that we have all made up our minds, if Mr. Suttle dines here, we shall look for our dinner somewhere else."

At this moment the Socialist entered the room, having evidently heard a part of the discussion. He affected to be highly indignant.

"What, sir," said he, in a blustering tone, "is not a man at liberty in this country to hold his own opinions? Is it come to such a pass that people of different sentiments in religion and politics are not to mix together in social intercourse? Are men in the nineteenth century to be persecuted in this manner for their conscientious opinions?"

CHAPTER XIV.

A Sketch of Socialism.

I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things: for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contracts, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, olive, none;
No occupation: all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure:
No sovereignty:
All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
Would I not have: but nature should bring forth
Of all its kind, all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.
I would with such perfection govern, sir,
To excel the golden age.

SHAKSPEARE,—*The Tempest.*

FOR the sake of those who may not be aware what are the principles and doctrines of the Socialists, and for the sake perhaps of the Socialists themselves, if any should read this book, it may be useful to give a brief sketch of their tenets.

The Socialists believe that the world has been going wrong for six thousand years, or infinitely longer, for aught they know; and that no one understood how to set it right, until one Robert Owen arose, who has at length found out the secret. On the first proposition—namely, that much evil exists

and has existed in the world — they dwell very forcibly, and no one contradicts them. But I have never yet heard them attempt to bring forward any reason why we should believe that Robert Owen, of all men, can amend it. Who is Mr. Robert Owen, that we should believe him able to accomplish so great a work?

Mr. Robert Owen is an elderly gentleman, by trade a cotton-manufacturer. "At the age of ten" (says his biographer) "he commenced the business of life *in the department of the distribution of wealth.*"[1] (Why should the writer be ashamed to state, in plain terms, the real truth — namely, that from the age of ten to sixteen, Mr. Owen was a linen-draper's apprentice?) Afterwards he became clerk to Mr. Robert Dale of New Lanark, and married his daughter, with whom he received a considerable fortune. The establishment at New Lanark had been founded by Mr. Dale on strictly religious principles, and afforded a good example to master-manufacturers of the important benefits, which may be conferred on hundreds of human beings by those who perform their duty of attending to the welfare of the numerous families within the sphere of their influence. When the establishment came into the hands of Mr. Owen, he no longer cared to maintain the religious practice of his father-in-law, but placed it on a different footing, according to his own views. For a while the rottenness of the new system did not ap-

[1] See New Moral World, p. 332.

pear. The establishment continued outwardly to prosper. Situated in a romantic part of Scotland, it attracted the attention of many benevolent and distinguished individuals. And poor Mr. Owen's head seems to have been turned by the numerous visits which he received from all the great characters of the day—members of parliament, dukes, and even princes and emperors—who happened to be travelling that way, and wished to see a cotton-manufactory.

It was certainly very pleasing to see the young factory-children dancing and singing, apparently in good health and spirits. Had they been taught, as in Mr. Dale's time, to obey God's law, amongst their other accomplishments, it would have been well. However, after a while the bubble burst, and the establishment, on Mr. Owen's system, was broken up. From New Lanark, Mr. Owen went to a place called New Harmony, in America, where he attempted to set up another establishment on Socialist principles. This also failed. But not even this second failure was enough to demonstrate to Mr. Owen the utter incompatibility of his system with the circumstances of man as God has made him.

It was during his residence at New Lanark, in the height of his prosperity, that is, while his capital was yet unexhausted, that Mr. Owen, like Don Quixote, and a hundred other enthusiasts, took into his head the preposterous notion, that he was destined to reform the world. He called together his workmen and dependents, and informed them, in a

grave and mysterious manner, that "it had been permitted to him to comprehend clearly, and without a vestige of doubt remaining on his mind," that certain plans and notions which he had in his head would render every man, woman, and child, as happy as sentient beings can be. Having this knowledge given him, and an understanding formed and corrected by experience, he could not rest satisfied till he had made it public. "Attend ye, then," said he, "to the words which I shall utter; for I am instructed to declare to you, and to all mankind, truths of the most mighty import; truths which, by their plainness and simplicity, shall with ease overcome the learning of the learned, and the power of the mighty ones of the earth; truths against which tongues shall not prevail, and before which the eloquent shall become dumb; truths, in short, which by their never-varying consistency with all the great, and glorious, and wonderful works of the Deity in his creation around us, will appear so evidently and unerringly true, that opposition to them from any quarter will be vain, futile, and utterly hopeless. Neither will they require the aid of any mystery for their support, or successful propagation in every part of the world. No! by their internal evidence alone they will go forth conquering and to conquer. Such, my friends, are the *divine truths* which I am about to declare to you and to the world."[2]

[2] See Owen's Lectures on Charity, pp. 11, 12, 17, 18.

In this tone did our fantastic cotton-spinner promulgate his opinions to his wondering workmen. I know not what his hearers thought of the pretended discoveries of their self-conceited master; but any sensible man amongst them would have addressed him in something like the following manner:

"Sir, all this is very fine talking, and no doubt you mean to do us good, and are convinced of the truth of your own opinion; but allow us to ask what authority have you to bring forward, which may induce us to believe what you state? Whence have you received your commission to instruct us in divine truth? Before I rest my expectations of happiness in this world and in the next on your schemes, and risk the welfare of my family, as well as my own soul, I must have some proof or authority, beyond your mere assertion, that you are really able to instruct me. I know on what authority I have received the truths contained in the holy Bible. I know that the prophets, and evangelists, and apostles, were commissioned by God to teach mankind the way to happiness, because they wrought such miracles as no man can do, except God be with him; and therefore the word in their mouth is truth. And I know also that the apostles, before they left the world, did, by the command of Christ their Master, commission others after them, who should, even to the end of the world, instruct men how they may be happy in this life, and obtain salvation in the next, according to the things

written in God's holy word. But you, sir, neither work any miracles nor shew any commission, but only assure us that what you bring forward is your fixed opinion. So it may be, and yet be mistaken and untrue; which I am the more inclined to believe it is, because it is in many respects contrary to what God's ministers have taught us out of His sacred word, and what we ourselves may read therein."

Whether any of Mr. Owen's workmen thus ventured to controvert their master's fancies, I cannot say; but certainly this was the way in which his notions were generally received. He was laughed at as a well-meaning enthusiast—for men did not at first know that he was an infidel and blasphemer of his Saviour—and himself and his works sank into insignificance.

But how has it happened that the schemes of Mr. Owen, which attracted little notice at the time, and sunk into oblivion like an hundred other similar speculations, have since revived, and gained much attention and obtained many thousands of adherents? The truth is, that the country was not then ripe for them. Mr. Owen was a step in advance of the age in its *downward* career; it required seven years of liberal government, seven years of free scope for liberal opinions, during which time law and religion have been set at naught, insubordination encouraged, and old-established opinions derided, before the country was ripe for Socialism. Socialism is the legitimate

development of the tendencies of a sensual and immoral population, when the restraints of law and religion are taken off.

If we turn to the documents of Socialism, and the numerous tracts and other writings which have issued from the press, their system appears under two aspects. First, there is their "constitution;" which is nothing more than the rules and regulations of a benefit-society, and, as such, has received the sanction of legal authority. It is called "the Constitution and Laws of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists," and contains nothing absolutely illegal, but much which is most absurd. It is, in fact, a joint-stock company, so constructed that it must inevitably fail, and swallow up the money of all who are so weak as to contribute. A large number of persons are persuaded to contribute their earnings; and out of them a certain portion are from time to time elected to live in a new-established community, in all comfort and abundance, at the expense of the rest. Why, this is nothing more than the old plan of which they complain, of making the *many pay for the benefit of the few*. Of course this community is likely to do well in a worldly point of view, so long as the contributions from without continue; just as Mr. Owen's establishment at Lanark looked very nice and flourishing as long as his capital lasted; but as soon as that was spent, it was discontinued; and so will the Social establishment come to naught when the contributions fall off.

Meanwhile, however, one object of the projector has fully succeeded; namely, to draw from the pockets of the people a considerable sum of money, which is expended in the maintenance of a set of lecturers and orators, for the dissemination of revolutionary and atheistical opinions. If Socialism were nothing more than a joint-stock company, such as it is described in its printed "constitution," there would be the less need of cautioning persons against it. People may of course club together, in any way which they think most likely to promote their temporal interests, provided they do not transgress the law, or infringe the rights of their neighbours: if their plan is ill concocted, they will gain wisdom by experience. But mixed up with their notable scheme are the most horribly blasphemous and immoral doctrines, contrary to every law of God, and subversive of all virtue in man.

Their leading doctrine is, that the character, feelings, and convictions of each man depend on the influence of external objects acting upon his natural organisation; and that man is so organised as to act in accordance with his conviction and feelings so formed; and consequently *that he is not created to be a responsible being*. Setting aside the jargon in which this doctrine is delivered, the position is simply this:—that a man who has been ill brought up, or whose natural disposition is bad, may get drunk, commit fornication, rob, kill, swear, and break every law of God or man, and no one has a right to blame

or question him; because, forsooth, it is his *misfortune*, not his *fault*. Truly, a comfortable state of society we should find ourselves in, if such doctrine became prevalent.

The Socialist, if not a wicked and wilful perverter of the truth, is a miserable philosopher and a very bad logician. He forgets that God has given every man a conscience to guide his will and to direct his actions; and that though we are not responsible for our original organisation, nor for many of the external circumstances in which we are placed, yet that we *are* responsible for the way in which we act under those circumstances. A native of New Zealand is not responsible for not going to church — at least until very lately — because there has been no church for him to go to. But the man who lives in a parish in England, and hears the church-going bell every Lord's day, and sees, as he must do if he is not blind, that all the best and wisest people in the parish attend the worship of God, and yet refuses to listen to this appeal which God makes to his heart and understanding, and goes to the gin-shop, or idles at his home, when he hears the church-bell ringing, — that man is responsible for remaining in a state of heathenish ignorance, and being a mere sensual animal, without God in the world. It is no excuse for him to say that his natural organisation inclines him to prefer gin-drinking, or reading the newspaper, or any other self-gratification, to going to church; and

that external circumstances have placed the gin-shop just in his way to the church-door, and so he cannot help going into it. His conscience tells him plainly that one leads to hell, and the other to heaven; and he is responsible for refusing to listen to the voice of conscience.

It is true that the edge of conscience is apt to be blunted by continual opposition, until a man may become a mere slave of his passions, or a tool in the hands of others, and have scarcely a will of his own; but then he who has thus blunted his own conscience is responsible for his own deed; just as a man who has committed an assault or murder when drunk is held responsible for his crime. It is possible, though far from probable, that the infidel lecturer or vulgar scoffer against Scripture may have talked himself into a belief of his doctrines, and may not experience any twinge of conscience or sense of pity for the souls which he is poisoning and ruining; even as a robber or an assassin may have committed so many crimes, as to be utterly callous to their enormity. Yet I question whether there are not times when even the professed infidel trembles in his inmost soul, and shudders at the prospect of hell before him, and would gladly change places with the humblest Christian. *That is conscience working at his heart;* and if he would but follow the dictates of that silent monitor, and humble his soul before the God who made him, and avail himself of those external and internal means of grace

which God has afforded, he might yet be saved from the gulf of perdition.

But if a man will not listen to his conscience, he is clearly responsible to the law which he has offended; and it is precisely the same in cases which are reserved for the judgment of God at the last day, as in those which come before a human tribunal. The man who has wilfully set aside the dictates of conscience, and has yielded to temptation, when he knew he ought to have resisted it, and done the devil's work, when he might have lived to the glory of God,—this man will be judged according to that which he hath, not according to that which he hath not. *He will not be condemned for his mal-organisation, or for the external circumstances under which he was placed, but because he did not act according to his conscience, and the light and grace given him.*

The Christian Churchman knows full well, though the Socialist does not, that the grace given at holy baptism is such as to counteract the evil influence of a corrupt nature; and, without changing the natural organisation, or obliterating the individual character, to sanctify and purify the whole inner man, so that he may live to his Maker's glory. And though the temptations and trials resulting from external circumstances in the present state of society are manifold and serious, yet the ordinances and instructions of the Christian Church, which the providence of God has set as a beacon in this land, if rightly used and obeyed, are sufficient to guide the Chris-

tian soul through his perilous journey in peace and safety to the end.

The crime of the Socialist is, that he will not submit to the guidance of God's law. He says with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I know not the Lord." The holy Gospel is scorned and reviled by these unhappy fanatics. The irrefragable body of evidence on which God has graciously established the truth of Christianity, and which has compelled the assent of the wisest and best men of the modern world, all this is passed over without notice; and it is coolly assumed in the nineteenth century, that the means of salvation, given by God to man, are a mere matter of opinion, to be rejected or received according to our own choice.

As might have been expected, where divine truth is rejected, the most depraved system is raised in its place. Men are to be brought up to live together in herds instead of families. All property is to be common. The marriage-tie is to be disregarded. It is true that the leaders of Socialism, finding that they had made a mistake, and excited the public disgust, by revealing this last feature of their vile system, have so far modified their plan as to propose that men and women should be bound together for a year before they should be at liberty to choose again,—thus arranging that human beings should live as *birds* instead of *beasts*. But it is manifest, on the smallest consideration, that this plan, like the former, would utterly destroy the holy community of families, and

break up that beautiful system whereby God has decreed that we should dwell in love together—the purest blessing enjoyed by man on earth. Instead of a young family, growing up under the care and protection of its lawful and natural parents,—before a child knew its father or mother, they would probably have been separated from each other, and formed new connexions. Instead of brothers and sisters dwelling under one common roof, sharing the affection of their common parents, knit together in love by the long-continued friendship of childhood and youth, *each child would have a number of half-brothers and sisters, some living at one house, and some at another.* In short, FAMILY and HOME, those most endearing of all names, would be obliterated from the new moral world, and all would be promiscuous confusion. I would only add to this picture, the incredible absurdity promulgated by the Socialist writers, that men and women are to be free from the restraints of clothing, except for the sake of warmth or ornament; but in-doors, and in fine weather, are to go about, if they please, in a state of nudity—and I think enough has been said to give my readers an idea of the mingled wickedness and ridiculousness of the social system, without entering into particulars even more shocking than those which I have already mentioned.

And this is the creed of a considerable number of the manufacturing population of the nineteenth century! The accusers of our Kentish peasantry

may reserve their ridicule for more worthy objects; and the madman Courtenay (if he were living) must hide his diminished rays before the superior lustre of Mr. Robert Owen.

When the Bishop of Exeter laid before the House of Lords some of the details of this most shocking association, the nation was struck with horror at the existence of such a body of men in the heart of our largest cities. Ministers of state declared that they had no notion either of the abominable nature of their doctrines, or the extent to which they had spread. One minister of the crown had the unmanliness and effrontery to blame the clergy for their supineness. It might have been answered, though it was not, that a year at least previously to the time when the ministers of the crown were forced by a Christian bishop to give their attention to an evil which must soon have destroyed the social edifice, the whole subject had been fully deliberated on by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and steps had been taken, through the means of the press, to check the growing evil.

CHAPTER XV.

Our Hero becomes a Socialist.

God proclaims
His hot displeasure against foolish men
That live an atheist life.

COWPER.

IT is a remarkable phenomenon, how very little the discrimination between truth and falsehood—between moral good or evil—depends on mental quickness or cleverness. God, in His mercy, has given to the most unlettered peasant or mechanic, if he have but an honest and true heart, as much power of distinguishing between right and wrong as to the most learned and enlightened philosopher; and the latter is quite as liable to be blinded to moral truth, by pride and evil habits, as the former.

Amongst those who had heard the Socialist's lectures in the town-hall, there was one who listened with more than ordinary attention. The mind of Charles Lever was at this time peculiarly open to the reception of error. Trained up in no moral habits of sound and sober judgment; his head filled with a mass of ill-digested notions; puffed up with no slight portion of self-conceit, in consequence of the applause which he received amongst his equals in rank,—he listened with delight to the wild schemes of the Socialist, and fancied that he was following

out the bright inventions of his own spirit, when he was but adopting a set of stale sophistries, which had been brought forward and refuted a hundred times before. Nay, even the better feelings of his heart, being undirected by divine truth, tended to lead him onward in his path of error. Keenly alive to the evils of the social system in which he lived, but uninfluenced by religious truth, without reverence or humility, he was unable to discern that the Gospel was the means ordained by God for the true regeneration of mankind, and that these evils only existed in proportion as the moral power of the Gospel was unknown. There was something in the professed object of Socialism—the idea of bringing about a system which would insure the happiness of the whole human race—which captivated his ardent and generous spirit; while the utter impracticability of the scheme, as well as its essential wickedness, were not likely to be detected by his ill-trained mind. Moreover, he had learnt to contemn the understanding and suspect the motives of his former associates; he hankered after novelty, and fancied himself destined for some exalted sphere of action. His domestic relations contributed to the same result. He despised his father's intellect; and though he still loved and respected his mother, yet it was more from gratitude for her long-tried affection, than from any principle of filial obedience. But that which most of all tended at the present time to make him restless and dissatisfied, was the refusal which he had met with from

Margaret, and the firmness with which she rejected all his advances. Few things more embitter the mind unprepared to bear disappointments by religious training, than the stings of rejected love; and few things render a man who is destitute of self-control more apt to rush into violent and headstrong courses.

Suttle at once perceived that Charles Lever was the very man for his purpose: clever and intelligent, but vain and uninstructed; fond of leading, but at the same time easily led. He soon wormed himself into his confidence, and found no difficulty in persuading him that the misery which he felt, and the dissatisfaction of his spirit, was the natural consequence of the evil system under which he lived. He led him to believe that the disappointment which he suffered, the difficulty of obtaining the object of his wishes, and gratifying his natural desires, arose from the prejudices in which the world was buried; that Margaret was withheld from him by the unjust tyranny of a bigoted father; and that an entirely new system was required before these evils could be remedied, and mankind placed in a situation in which their natural talent would have free scope, and their reasonable wishes be gratified.

He placed in the hands of his attentive pupil just such books as were suited to pamper his morbid feelings, keeping back at the first all which were likely to shock his better nature.

Lever studied the writings of the Socialists with intense interest; his mind being captivated with their

boldness and, as it appeared to him, originality. It was a grand thing, he thought, to regenerate society, which had been going wrong for ages, — to train up a generation which should be free from the evils to which our own is exposed.

It is true that the obvious objections to which so wild a scheme is liable sometimes occurred to the mind of Lever. But his friend,—for Suttle was now become his friend,—furnished him with arguments which, in the existing bias of his mind, served as sufficient answers. "How," asked Lever, "could a generation trained up in the old immoral way, as it was termed, give existence to a moral and perfect generation? How could the sort of men with which they were surrounded give birth to a state of things from which all selfishness and evil passion should be excluded?" Suttle explained to him that they were to be used simply as tools, or as the working impulse, — as you use a steam-engine simply for its power. Lever paused for a while—and mused on this explanation. "Was it not obvious," he at length continued, "that even if many joined their system, there would of necessity be a vast body of men who would oppose any such innovation?"

Suttle, in an unguarded moment, suggested, that which alone is the practicable means, the extermination by physical force—in other words, the wholesale murder of those who opposed their schemes; and with a fiendish look spoke of Maximilian Robespierre, and a guillotine by steam. But seeing his dupe shrink

from the notion with horror,—for though reckless and violent, he was not yet blood-thirsty, (blood-thirstiness comes in general only by actual strife and conflict)—he spoke no more of such topics, but declared that all he wished to effect was a gradual and peaceable change by moral means of reasoning and persuasion. And this was an argument with which the mind of Lever was satisfied and deluded.

We must here draw a veil over some portion of our hero's life. Let it suffice to state, that he abandoned himself to the doctrines which he had embraced, and altogether deserted Christian worship; to the great distress of his mother, and against the earnest entreaty of his father; to whom he was prepared to give the obvious answer, that *if they thought fit to leave the Church, he had an equal right to leave the Chapel;* if they had chosen for themselves one form of religion, he had an equal right to choose another. And thus, free from all the restraints of religion, he fell, by natural consequence, into a course of living to which the unrestrained will of youth will inevitably lead. * * * *

Meanwhile the state of affairs throughout the country conduced to the daily increase of all sorts and forms of liberal opinions. Strange to say, the government, instead of attempting to check the progress of revolutionary doctrines, seemed anxious to give them all the countenance they were able, by placing in offices of trust and power the persons who

were most active as demagogues. It was not likely that such opinions as were now spread through the mass of the people should long remain without their natural fruit. When the notion that society must undergo a great change was embraced by hundreds and thousands of people, and no check was placed on their meetings, but, on the contrary, encouragement given by the highest official authorities,—what could prevent the natural result, that the people should proceed to the attempt to put their fancied reform into effect? It was not long before a chartist conspiracy was complete throughout that part of the country; the leader of which was one Craven Bullyer, a vain ambitious person, who had been appointed by the ministers one of the magistrates of Laxington, notwithstanding the notoriety of his revolutionary character. As a pretext for insurrection, it was of course necessary that some specific grievance should be alleged; and the leaders of the sedition could think of no better watchword to delude the ignorant people than the old cry for "universal suffrage, ballot, and annual parliaments." They did not tell the people that to ask for these things was to demand nothing more or less than that the ancient English constitution should be destroyed, and a democracy erected in its place.

Lever at length discerned plainly that the tendency of events was to open violence, and that with the pretext of appealing to moral force only, he had been led on to engage in a rebellion. He found that

he had been duped by men themselves but the tools of others who kept in the back ground. He became less eager in the cause, and consequently was suspected, and lost his influence and consequence. Yet so mixed up was he with the schemes of the traitors, that he found it impossible to disengage himself: a false sense of honour kept him to his principles; and so he was led on gradually to criminal practices, though at the time he despised the character, and shrunk with horror from the designs, of the persons with whom his lot was now cast. Sometimes indeed he persuaded himself that by continuing to act with them he might be able to mitigate the atrocities into which it was evident they were prepared to rush. Partly from this motive, and partly from the force of circumstances, he continued to be involved in the plans of the conspirators.

CHAPTER XVI.

Moral Force.

Happy the man who sees a God employed
In all the good or ill that chequer life!
Resolving all events, with their effects
And manifold results, into the will
And arbitration wise of the Supreme.

COWPER.

THE clergyman of Laxington during this period was a very different person from those who held the office in Lever's boyish days. Mr. Morton was a sound Churchman, who performed his duties zealously and conscientiously, courting no popularity by doubtful means, but gaining a good deal by the straightforward integrity of his conduct, and the Christian courtesy of his demeanour. During the lectures of the Socialist, and the subsequent course of events, he had preserved a rigid silence in the pulpit with regard to their proceedings, never once mentioning them by name; but at the same time carefully adapting his sermons to counteract their principles; preaching on the existence and attributes of God, the obvious duty of creatures to live to the glory of their Maker; the accountability of man both to divine and human law; the resurrection, and the judgment to come. And though he thought it hard

that, after so many years of zealous ministry, he should have thus to lay again the very foundation of religion, yet he accommodated himself to the necessities of the times, and endeavoured to guard the most unlearned of his flock against the poison with which the atmosphere was infected. Meanwhile he was even more assiduous than ever in his parochial duties, and most active and diligent in counteracting the plans of the Socialists, by personal visits to any of his congregation who were likely to be led astray, and in the kindest manner talking over the subject with them, though without any violent abuse of the Socialists; but speaking of them as unfortunate and misguided men, whom it was our duty to pity and pray for, but at the same time carefully to avoid.

The consequence of this judicious conduct was, that Mr. Morton had the satisfaction of not losing a single member of his flock; in which respect he was far more fortunate than the Dissenters. Attached to their ministers by no bond except mere personal preference or caprice, acknowledging in them no divine commission to teach, and consequently, as we may well believe, unaided by a higher power, many of them joined the ranks of Socialism, which in truth was but another form of heresy. The dissenting ministers, indignant at losing the members of their flock, were extremely anxious that Mr. Morton should join them in a public controversy to which the Socialist lecturer had invited them. But Mr. Morton utterly refused to make common cause with them, or

to engage in public controversy with the Socialists; well knowing that notoriety and consequence was just what would most help the Socialist's cause, and that it was entirely useless to contend with one with whom he had no principle in common. One of the Dissenters, who was less prudent, met the Socialist at a public meeting on his own ground; attempted to fight him with his own weapon, and give railing for railing; the consequence of which was, that he only lost his temper, and was a good deal laughed at.

So things went on for a while at Laxington; the Church losing nothing, but rather gaining strength—the Dissenters vexed and mortified at the success of the Socialists, who, if they could but have discerned it, were only carrying their own principles of unlimited private judgment, and the right of choosing religion for themselves, to its legitimate result.

Meanwhile the principles which were at work proceeded onwards to their natural effects. Insubordination and rioting increased to a fearful extent; large bodies of working men and artisans paraded the streets, causing great alarm to the peaceful inhabitants, entirely unchecked by the magistrates. At last, encouraged by their impunity, they began to organise themselves in bands, to arm themselves with pikes, and discharge fire-arms in the streets. All this they called a demonstration of *moral force!*

One method of demonstrating their moral force was by assembling in large bodies, on a given day

in the church. Fortunately they took it into their heads to send notice of their intention to Mr. Morton, who prepared for them not only with moral but physical force, having a strong body of police and special constables ready to suppress any outrage, and the churchwardens having given full warning that they should prosecute any man who was guilty of brawling in the church. All the good the Chartists got by going to church was, that they were silent hearers of a solemn and affecting remonstrance, which it may be hoped was blessed to the profit of some of them.

Mr. Morton took his text from Psalm lviii. 10, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth." The following is the substance of his sermon:—"It was obvious," he said, "to the commonest understanding, that man did not make himself; therefore he must have been placed in this world by a superior Power; and the same Power it was that continued to uphold and govern the visible universe. These were truths acknowledged by the rudest savage, no less than the wisest philosopher. But if man was thus created by a superior Power, it was certain that he was not made for nothing. The mechanic did not employ his labour and his skill in making things for no purpose. In like manner, a Being who was able to make a creature so complicated as man, would not create him but for some definite object; and what object could that be, but that he should *obey*

the law, and live to the glory of God, who made him. And if so, it was clear that each rational being, placed by God upon this earth, was accountable to the God who created him for living, or not living, to His glory. Common sense had taught men of all ages these vital and fundamental truths. God, however, had not left us to the mere dictates of reason, but had given us a revelation of His will. He had inspired and commissioned His servants in divers ages to teach men what was His law; and had proved them to be sent by Him by enabling them to prophesy and to work miracles. The revelation of His will, thus given at divers times, was collected in the holy Scriptures. Besides recording the commandments of God, holy Scripture furnishes us with examples of the working of God's providence. The whole history of the Jews is an exemplification of the certainty with which God punishes those who rebel against His laws, and rewards those who diligently serve Him. The Christian dispensation carries our views beyond the limits of this temporary scene, and declares to us the rewards and punishments of another world, a resurrection and a judgment to come. In order to teach mankind these great truths, God sent His only Son into the world, who, after fulfilling prophecies and performing miracles, which shewed Him to be a teacher sent from God, and teaching, amongst other great truths, the doctrine of a resurrection and a judgment, Himself descended into the grave, and, after three days, rose again, the first-fruits, from the

dead. All these are notorious facts, received by the whole civilised world from the concurrent testimony of history. They are attested by a greater body of evidence than any other fact of history. We might as well dispute that Alexander conquered the Persians, or that Julius Cæsar ruled over the Romans, as that Jesus Christ lived and died upon the earth, and did the works and spoke the words recorded of Him in the four Gospels. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that other evidence should be given than that which *is* given,—that the word of God, which the ministers of the Church read and expound to the people, is the rule of life, whereby the God who placed us in this world wills that we should live, in order to fulfil the object of our being; and that they who despise God's law will one day know to their cost, that 'verily there is a God that judgeth the earth.'

"But," continued he, with an abrupt animation, —"but, in truth, *we all believe it*. Though some, it may be, put the thought from them, and endeavour to stifle the voice of conscience, yet the veriest scoffer and blasphemer, the most wicked man on earth, does, I am persuaded, oftentimes feel the ground shaking beneath his feet, and the terrors of the judgment fill his guilty soul with dark forebodings, telling him, in accents too plain to be mistaken, that *after death will come the judgment*. Yes, he does believe, though he will not allow it. He believes, and trembles; he cannot shake from him his belief. It

haunts him in the midst of his guilty excesses; it follows him in his dark imaginings; it glares upon him in the open day; it pursues him in the silence of night. The words—the startling words—continually intrude upon his soul, 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous; *doubtless there is a God which judgeth the earth.*' Yes, I would make bold to say that there is scarcely a man in this wide kingdom, blest as it is with the external ordinances of religion, who, when he hears the church-bell, and neglects the summons, does not feel that he is disobeying and dishonouring God; — no, nor any one who enters the house of God, and does so with irreverence, or with any other view than to kneel down and humble himself before his Maker, who does not feel in his heart that the *day will come when he will have to give an account before God for the evil and audacious deed which he is then committing.*

"But, after all, my brethren—my fellow-Christians, I would rather say—whence arises this strange repugnance in the heart of man against his Maker? *Is it that men are happy in living without God in the world?* The drunkard, the sensualist, the rioter, the agitator, the turbulent, the scoffer, the blasphemer, are they happy in their blasphemy, their scoffing, their rioting, their drunkenness, and their impurities? Nay, we know that they are not; on the contrary, they are restless, uncomfortable, discontented. Even in this world they experience in some degree the punishment of sin, in the misery of their bodies

and disquietude of their souls. And then if, after all their efforts to put the thought from them, what if that which even now their conscience bids them fear, the judgment of the great day, should suddenly come upon them,—what if they should be called on unexpectedly to give an account of their evil lives, and should find that their misery and punishment cease not with the grave, but pursue them to eternity, increased tenfold by the bitterness of remorse —the eternal agonies of a ruined soul and tortured body! O, if there be any spectacle on earth which more than another calls up the pity of all good men, it is the sight of those who live in poverty and misery, and discontent, and suffering, here on earth, and yet have no hope of a better condition hereafter. The best they can look for is, that they may be blotted out from existence; their breath scattered to the four winds of heaven, and their bodies form the elements of future combinations. *But this cannot be;* there is neither reason, nor revelation, nor pretext, which can support them in this belief. There is nothing to rest on; it is a mere guess and random supposition, after all: whereas, on the other side, in proof of the resurrection and the judgment to come, is ranged the whole weight of reason and argument, the dictate of common sense, the belief of every nation under heaven, yea, and the message of God Himself, revealed to us by His very Son, written in His own sacred word, and preached to all men by the ministers whom He hath sent.

"O, that poor sinful man would but allow his better feelings and his conscience to influence him, and turn to God, before it be too late, with a humble and contrite spirit! O, that any words of mine could prevail on those amongst you who have suffered yourselves to be deceived and misguided,—that I could induce you to look upon God as your loving Father rather than your Judge, and His law not as a law of condemnation (except to those who stubbornly reject it), but as a most blessed declaration of mercy and loving-kindness! O, that I could bring you to believe and feel, that as 'there is a God that judgeth the earth,' so verily '*there is a reward also for the righteous*,'—yea, a reward in this world and in heaven. For those who diligently seek Him—for those who yield Him their obedience—the toils of life are smoothed, the poverty, misery, discomfort, and disquietness of this world are remedied—the gates of heaven are opened—an eternity of bliss prepared. *Yea, and for the rebellious also!* so great is the mercy and long-suffering of God, that to the rebellious also, if they will turn from their sin, pardon and reconciliation are offered. The Son of God is not a Judge only, but a most merciful Saviour; He hath purchased on the cross the life of those who will come to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer.

"Why will not men give up their unreasonable, ungrateful, and most fatal hostility against God, and yield themselves to His mild yoke and easy service?

The effort may be hard at first—all first attempts are hard and difficult; but only persevere and pray, and avail yourselves of the means provided, and the rugged path will be made smooth—the way of duty will be straightened. What a paradise might this world present, if men would live in obedience to the mild precepts of the blessed Gospel! How would all wars and tumults, all heart-burnings and misery, vanish from the world, if all men were real Christians! No need of human schemes for the regeneration of mankind. God Himself has prepared the way of happiness, and opened to us the path of peace. And if it appear to some a hopeless expectation that any great amelioration should take place in the vast field of human society, still it is in the power of every one amongst us to secure his own happiness at least, both in this world and the next, by yielding a grateful and reasonable service to the God who made him, and accepting the terms of pardon and reconciliation so freely offered by a loving though offended Father, for the sake of the precious blood-shedding of Christ our Lord.

"Let me then conclude in the humble yet impressive words of the Church universal: 'Lord, *we believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.* We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood: make them to be numbered with Thy saints, in glory everlasting.'"

The deeply impressive manner in which the mi-

nister of God made this appeal to the misguided men —the awful sternness of his denunciation, coupled with the winning earnestness of his invitation to them to accept God's mercy — wrought a visible effect on the strange assembly. Notwithstanding some interruption, his address was listened to throughout; and as he reasoned on temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, it was clear that many of his hearers trembled. The effect on the congregation was such as their leaders had not expected. It was not, however, likely that a single sermon should prevent the results to which events were fast approaching: though the solemn words of truth might be blessed by God, and fix themselves in the hearts of some who heard them, yet from the souls of others they glanced as an arrow shot against a wall; for long-continued sin renders the heart of man hard and obdurate as the nether millstone.

CHAPTER XVII.

Doubts and Difficulties.

Thy thoughts, Thy ways, great God! are not as mine;
And to Thy mercy I myself resign. CRABBE.

MR. MORTON was sitting that evening in his study, pondering over the sad state of affairs, and inwardly praying to God to turn the hearts of the misguided people, when his servant announced that a person residing in his parish desired to speak with him; and Charles Lever was ushered into his presence.

It is a fearful crisis in the life of man when the conscience is strongly moved, but the will not yet determined; when the danger and misery of sin are made manifest to the understanding, but the affections are not yet effectually touched by the grace of God. Such was the inward condition of Lever. Mr. Morton's address operating upon a spirit already disgusted with a course of ungodliness, had convinced him of the imminent peril, the madness of remaining in his present state; while, at the same time, his mind, which for a long time had been immersed in the gloom of scepticism, was unable to furnish hope or guidance for the future. The Socialist, fearful of losing his victim, had poisoned his mind with doubts

and subtilties, which had hitherto effectually prevented him from deriving comfort from that source whence alone true comfort is to be obtained. But the Socialist's influence was beginning to lose its hold; and in a fit of desperation Lever resolved to seek the advice of Mr. Morton.

The worthy pastor knew Lever's person and character, and was somewhat surprised at his visit; but he received him with a kindness and courtesy of manner which contributed to remove his embarrassment.

"Sir," said Lever respectfully, "I feel that it is an unwarrantable liberty for one who has scarcely ever entered your church before to-day, to intrude upon you with his personal troubles and difficulties."

Mr. Morton. "I beg you will not for a moment longer think so. My time and my services are at the command of those amongst whom the providence of God has ordained me to minister; and if I can be of service, either in temporal or spiritual matters, to any of my parishioners, it is a duty of pleasure."

Mr. Morton then pointed to a chair, and Lever took the place assigned to him; when the following conversation ensued.

Lever. "It is perhaps best, sir, that I spare your time, by coming at once to the point. Let me confess to you that I am a Socialist. Such, at least, *has been* my persuasion. I need not explain to you, probably, what are the opinions of those who bear that name. I have doubted, I cannot say disbelieved,

the existence and the providence of God; and have taken no care to live according to His laws. But I begin to have great misgivings on the subject. The novelty has worn off; and the more I see of the views and characters of those who advocate Socialist principles, the more I dislike them. Your sermon of to-day, sir, has much affected me. You have described so accurately what has often passed in my own mind, that I have made bold to come and seek your further counsel."

Mr. Morton. "Be assured that I will do my best to aid you; and with the book of God before me, I hope I may promise that my aid will not be ineffectual."

Lever. "The arguments which you have used in your sermon this morning respecting the duty of rational beings to live to the glory of Him who made them, appear to me conclusive and undeniable; that is, if we have really been placed in this world by a good and benevolent Being."

Mr. Morton. "Can you doubt it for a moment, when you see the wonderful provision which has been made for our preservation and sustenance,—the comforts and blessings which He has showered around us?"

Lever. "I see all these; and cannot deny that every where around us are evident signs of a Divine providence and benevolence. But, at the same time, sir, I meet with so many difficulties and contradictions, that I am confounded and staggered. If you

could remove from my mind the doubts and perplexities under which I labour, you would indeed be conferring on me a benefit."

Mr. Morton. "All that I can, I will do most willingly. But do not suppose that I or any other man alive can solve all the difficulties which intrude themselves into men's minds. God's ways are far above our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. There is much in the natural, as in the moral world, which far surpasses our present power of understanding. Go to the wisest philosopher, and he will at once confess to you that, with all his skill, Nature is still to him a mystery and a difficulty. The more he penetrates into her hidden depths, the deeper still is the abyss which opens before him. The farther he soars into her loftiest heights, still the more inaccessible do the summits of her kingdom appear. The way seems lengthening as we go, and our object is no nearer attainment than at the first. The finest telescope, which reveals to the eye thousands of stars, and suns, and systems, does at the same time discover in the dim distance myriads of other worlds, the forms and revolutions of which are imperceptible by human vision. So, on the other hand, when we have discovered, by microscopic aid, that every drop of water, nay, that every breath of air, teems with multitudes of organised beings, we may discover other insects so minute as to feed on the bodies of those which are to the naked eye as mere dust and mildew. Every art and science is com-

passed about with difficulties which we cannot solve. Why then should we expect to know the mysteries of the invisible world? Rather let us be content to receive much in faith, until, in another state of being, it shall please God to remove the film from our eyes."

Lever. "You have already in part removed my difficulty, in shewing me that difficulties are to be expected; I had not before learned to think of them in that light. I now understand you, that even the existence of difficulties which cannot be removed ought not to be wondered at, but rather to be expected."

Mr. Morton. "Undoubtedly.—Nevertheless there is no reason why we should not endeavour to solve them, provided only we do so with reverence and humility. State your difficulties, and I will give the best answer I am able."

Lever. "That which most perplexes me, is the immense mass of evil which we see every where in the world around us. Whence arises it? It cannot come from a merciful God; and why, if He is omnipotent, does He not prevent it?"

Mr. Morton. "The origin of evil! that is indeed a question far beyond my power to solve. It is the grand difficulty of the moral world, which meets us at every turn, and has perplexed the wisest men of every age. But observe, my friend, *it is not a difficulty peculiar to revealed religion.* Every scheme of philosophy, from the most ancient system down to the newest, is alike subject to it. Philosophy cannot

reach it. Revelation plainly states the fact, and furnishes, not the solution, but the remedy."

Lever. "Pray tell me, sir, how religion treats this perplexing subject."

Mr. Morton. "Let me take the question as you have put it. You are perplexed at the vast prevalence of evil in the world. But first I would ask, *how are you sure that evil is so abundant in the world, in comparison with good?* This poor earth which we inhabit is but one of millions,—a speck in the ocean of infinity. What if this is the only planet on which Satan is able to maintain his warfare? a single stronghold in which he keeps up his conflict with the powers of heaven, before he is for ever driven to the depths of hell? What if the millions of stars which crowd the heavens are the blessed abode of pure unfallen beings? You consider it strange that evil should exist in this world; therefore, on your own hypothesis, it is likely that other worlds are free from the same scourge."

Lever. "Certainly, for aught we know, they may be so. But still why is evil permitted to rage in this one world?"

Mr. Morton. "That is placing the difficulty on somewhat a new ground. You now demand a reason, not for the *prevalence*, but for the *existence* of evil. All I can answer is, that *it is man's own choice*, his own act and deed. God made him a free agent, and he chose evil. It is possible to conceive the immense universe peopled with creatures who *could not* do

otherwise than as God willed—mere automatons, who should move in one fixed order, like the heavenly bodies, which roll continually in their appointed orbit. But the great Creator deemed it conducive to His glory, that there should be intelligent beings who might yield Him a free and willing homage. *In the freedom of the creature was involved the possibility of sin.* If man could not sin as well as obey, he had been no free agent. In this our world, of which alone we know the history, man abused his freedom, and by sin has brought on himself misery."

Lever assented to the truth of his instructor's statement. "It is indeed so," he said with a sigh; "the fact is too certain, though the cause may be obscure."

"But," continued Mr. Morton, "mark, I pray you, how even the sin of man, which might have seemed to dishonour God, has served to call forth the most astonishing, the most inexpressible display of His glory, in the REDEMPTION which His infinite goodness wrought, when the Son of God took upon Himself our nature, and in the form of suffering man endured the penalty of man's transgression. Let us no longer perplex ourselves about the *origin* of evil, but look rather at the glorious *remedy*. If sinful man would but avail himself of the means of grace and salvation offered in the blessed gospel, even this world might be a paradise of bliss. Sin and misery might at once be swept away; and though men in general are perversely blind to their happiness, still

it is in the power of each one amongst us—it is in the power of you or me, to attain happiness through the means provided in the blessed gospel.

"Let this, then, suffice for us. Instead of perplexing ourselves about the prevalence of evil in the world, let us avail ourselves of the antidote which the mercy of God hath provided. If 'sin abounds,' we know that 'grace doth much more abound.' If our very birth is tainted with original corruption, let us bless God that in the healing waters of baptism a cure is found. If sin still strives to raise itself, and gain the mastery in the heart of the baptized Christian, let us look to those means of grace which God has given us in His Church, His Sacraments, His Sabbath, and His Word. If temptations to sin arise both from within and without, let us set against them the ever-watchful voice of conscience, which stands like a sentinel at the door of our heart, and the ever-present grace of the Spirit to aid our understanding and strengthen our will; not forgetting those external means of resisting evil, with which God surrounds us from our youth up, in the natural influence of parents, the ordained authority of God's ministers, and the power of human laws and government, and all the various inducements to good, and the various penalties which deter men, through fear and shame, from the commission of evil.

"Let us, in short, without denying the prevalence of evil, yet dwell rather on the vast apparatus of means whereby a merciful God has guarded against

it. From a state of trial evil is inseparable. To deny, or to extenuate the power of evil, is as wrong and as imprudent as to magnify it. Do not let us, in the spirit of the self-indulgent scepticism of the present day, explain away the existence of our spiritual adversary, the devil; and regard him as a mere impersonal quality or abstract notion. But let us regard him, as he is represented in the pages of Scripture, as an Evil Being, *a person*, powerful, intelligent, watchful, malicious, hating what is good, polluting what is holy, corrupting what is pure, sowing tares among the wheat,[2] marring, where he can, God's works, even as there are in this world around us many men of so fiendish a disposition as to delight apparently in evil, and occupy themselves continually in promulgating sin and misery; let us regard Satan as the prime mover and master of these wretched men, seeking in various ways to deceive and destroy us; let us think on him, his power and malice, and let us tremble. But let us think also on Him who is stronger than the evil one, and is ever ready to aid and to save us. Let us remember that God, our merciful Father, has declared that 'He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.' Let us put our whole trust in Christ, the Seed of the woman, the Bruiser of the serpent's head, Himself the Van-

[2] Sewell's Christian Morals.

quisher of Satan's power, and able therefore to save us. Let us think on the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who has once already made His dwelling in our hearts, and will, if we walk by His guidance, keep from us the power of the tempter, and preserve us in purity and holiness. And amidst the conflicting elements which exist in the world around us, amongst the perplexities and difficulties of our present state, let us be sure of this one fact—that *our final destiny is placed in our own hands*—good and evil, heaven and hell, life and death, are placed before us; let us choose life."

In words like these did the worthy pastor, kindling with his subject, and uninterrupted by his hearer, vindicate the honour of God from such objections as the malicious ingenuity of the devil or man had raised against it, and endeavour to remove the stains of doubt and unbelief, which, in its wayward course, the soul of his companion had contracted. Lever listened with earnest deference; the enthusiasm of the speaker rivetted his attention; and when he paused for a moment, Lever remained silent, as if desiring to hear farther, and having nothing to offer in reply. Mr. Morton, finding that he made no answer, proceeded in a different train of thought.

"I have said what I was able to remove the difficulties which you have brought forward, simply because they were such as you said perplexed your mind. But allow me now to add, that the real difficulty is yet untouched. The real difficulty is

what perhaps you do not suspect. It is a moral difficulty, not metaphysical. It is in the heart, not in the head. You will never be relieved from your present perplexities by argument. But I will tell you how you may be relieved, and that certainly. First, LEAVE OFF SIN. Sin is the real obstacle. You must at once give up whatsoever known and habitual sin besets you. [Lever unconsciously covered his face with his hands, and shrunk beneath the earnest appeal of the speaker.] Until a man has put from him the accursed thing, the guilt of known sin, he can make no progress in faith or holiness. It is a great step when that is done. Yet much will remain afterwards. You must pray earnestly for enlightenment and grace. You must pray both in your closet and in God's house. You must read and meditate on God's gracious revelation, and endeavour to accustom your mind to regard what is therein written as actual and real; to learn to think on heaven and hell, eternity, redemption, the omnipresence of God, the proffered aid of sanctification by the Spirit, the real efficacy of prayer, — these, and other revealed truths, you must accustom yourself to regard as practical and all-important facts. To this end, also, a constant recurrence to the Church's ordinances, and especially to the holy communion, is an appointed means of contributing. Thus you should surround yourself with an atmosphere of faith and holy thoughts, and accustom yourself to acts of self-denial and obedience; and all these difficulties, which

now perplex you, will appear as nothing. You will no longer regard them; or you will view them only as the evidences that God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts."

Mr. Morton here ceased to speak, thinking that what he had already said might be sufficient for the present. Lever said little in reply. He did not attempt to controvert what had been advanced. He thanked Mr. Morton for his advice, and hoped that he might benefit by it. Mr. Morton assured him at parting, that he should consider it a pleasure, as well as a duty, to converse with him again at any future time; and Lever departed, with thoughtful and downcast looks.

For several days he remained in the same perplexed mood. The Sunday came, and Mr. Morton cast his eye around his congregation, hoping that Lever would have been amongst them. But he was not there. Neither was he with Socialists. There was, in truth, at this period of Lever's life a mystery about his conduct, which we will not now unravel. Suffice it to say, that he had not yet brought himself even to take the preliminary step which Mr. Morton had plainly told him was necessary to remove his difficulties. No wonder if we shall still find him unable to extricate himself from the schemes of evil and designing men.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Assassination.

Thou can'st not say I did it.
SHAKSPEARE, — *Macbeth.*

ABOUT this time an event occurred at Laxington which must be recorded, both because it is strongly indicative of the fearful extent of evil principle which pervaded the working classes, and also because our hero was, to a certain degree, implicated in it.

Owing to a scarcity of business, the master-joiners in the town had found it absolutely necessary to reduce the rate of their workmen's weekly wages from a guinea to eighteen shillings. This of course caused great discontent; and a general strike amongst them was the consequence. For some time all work was at a stand, neither masters nor men being inclined to give way; and much loss resulted to both parties from this intermission of employment. At last one of the master-builders, being in the midst of an undertaking which he was obliged by contract to complete within a given time, engaged several labourers to work for him from an adjoining district. These men soon found their new quarters any thing but agreeable, being subject to constant abuse and ill-treatment from the "turn-outs," and being threat-

ened with the most fearful consequences, if they continued to work contrary to the rules laid down by the Union. Such threats, however, did not deter them from their employment.

One evening, soon after dark, the inhabitants of the outskirts of the town were alarmed by the sound of a shot, immediately succeeded by the cries of a man apparently wounded; who, on their going to his assistance, was found weltering in blood in the middle of the road. He proved to be one of the new workmen, who had come from the country to supply the place of those who had refused to work. The wounded man was carried into an adjoining house in great agony, the ball having lodged in a vital part of the body. The unfortunate man lived some days, but from the first his case was hopeless. His mind chiefly dwelt on the destitute condition of his wife and children; he had supported them by his honest labour, and might have continued to maintain them in comfort, but for the hand of the dastardly assassin. Now, alas! they would be left to the charity of others, or the tender mercies of a workhouse. These reflections embittered his last moments. He could freely have forgiven his murderer, so far as his own life was concerned; but it required all the influence of Christian principle, infused into him by the worthy clergyman who attended his deathbed, to induce him to pray for the forgiveness of him who had involved those most dear to him in poverty and destitution.

Meanwhile every inquiry was made to secure the murderer. The wounded man, being a stranger, was unable to identify him by name, or even by person; only he described the assassin as a tall dark man, in a workman's dress, who, without saying a word, had presented a pistol to his breast, and fired. One of the bystanders who heard this declaration immediately stated that he had seen Charles Lever pass down the street but a short time previously; and the appearance and dress of the assassin described by the wounded man corresponded with those of Lever. Upon this information the magistrate of course issued a warrant for the apprehension of the accused. Lever was found at his usual employment, and expressed great surprise at his arrest; but on searching his house, further cause of suspicion appeared in the discovery of a pair of pistols, which had evidently been recently used; and the bore of the barrels corresponded with the size of the bullet which had been extracted from the body of the wounded man.

These facts put together—the description of the dress and appearance of the assassin given by the dying man, the statement of the witness who had seen Lever going towards the spot, and the discovery in his possession of the pistol recently used—certainly looked suspicious. He was told by the magistrate that he was at liberty to make what statement he chose, in order to explain the suspicious circumstances, and at the same time warned that what he said might be used in evidence against him.

Lever indignantly repelled the charge. He was incapable of so foul a deed. What motive could he have in committing it? He was not himself a journeyman, but had recently entered into partnership with his father; neither was he employed in the same branch of business as that of the workmen who complained of the intrusion of the strangers. As to the pistols found in his possession, he stated that he had used them in firing at a mark, which was proved by witnesses whom he brought forward; his dress, he said, was much the same as that of a hundred other workmen, and therefore could not be used to identify him; and there were many men as tall and dark as himself. Being reminded that he had been seen going towards the spot at about the time of the murder, and being required to state what was his business in that direction, he admitted the fact of his having been in that part of the town, but refused to state what had led him there. Though the former part of his statement had removed some of the suspicious circumstances, yet the mystery of his proceedings, and his refusal to give an account of his errand in the neighbourhood of the murder, joined with the reputation which he had of being a violent and disaffected person, seemed to the magistrates to warrant them in detaining him; and he was accordingly remanded to prison until further inquiry should have been made, and until the life or death of the wounded man should be decided.

Fortunately for Lever, the policemen soon got

on the true scent. The large reward which was offered for the discovery of the murderer induced one of the "turn-outs" to divulge the whole affair, when the most diabolical conspiracy was brought to light; and it appeared that hundreds of men, not only at Laxington, but elsewhere, were banded together, many of whom had been guilty of a criminal knowledge of the intended murder — that a stranger from a distance had been deliberately hired to commit the bloody deed, and had been paid a stipulated sum out of the funds of the Union.

It makes one's blood run cold to know that such a horrible system should exist amongst us. One can scarcely believe that Englishmen, to whose character such baseness and atrocity has hitherto been abhorrent, should have become so degraded; yet such, alas! are plain facts in the nineteenth century—too certain to be denied. Truly it is the business of all who love their country to consider what is the real cause of these horrible evils, and lend their aid to remove them.

Lever being thus exculpated from the charge brought against him, and having proved that he was not even a member of the Trades-union—for, as he truly said, not being a workman for wages, his interests were different from theirs,—he was of course discharged by the magistrates, one of whom, hoping that the circumstances might have a beneficial influence on Lever's mind, plainly told him that the inconvenience he had experienced was in a great

measure owing to the indifferent character which he bore, and gave him a kind, though serious reproof; while, at the same time, he expressed his satisfaction that his innocence had been proved.

Had Lever taken the admonition of the magistrate in good part, it might have been profitable to him. Indignant as he was at being supposed capable of committing so foul a crime as to waylay and assassinate even his greatest enemy, yet had he thought on the character and principles of those who had been his daily companions, he could not but have confessed that there were amongst them men fit for any baseness or crime. To be led through the streets as a malefactor, and to be looked on with horror as a murderer, had cut deep into his sensitive heart. But then he might have reflected, that had his character been different from what it was—had he been able honestly to explain his conduct on the night of the murder, and had his associates and connexions been such as a respectable man ought to have —no one would for a moment have supposed him capable of the crime, and he would have been spared the humiliation to which he had been subjected. Nay, though he had, in truth, no guilty knowledge of the murder, yet he might have seen that it was connected with that turbulent and wicked spirit which he himself had helped to foster; so that, morally, he was not altogether so free from guilt as he would fain have believed himself.

Unfortunately his spirit was too proud for such

reflections; and though of late he had been disposed to view his own conduct with little satisfaction, he was far from having yet attained the spirit of Christian endurance, which enables a true follower of Jesus to submit patiently to persecution, even though suffering wrongfully.

Another circumstance which tended to foster his irritation and resentment was, that his case was warmly taken up by the *Laxington Chronicle*. He was represented as a persecuted man, and the magistrates who imprisoned him were stigmatised as unjust oppressors. These excitements, operating upon his own wounded feelings, checked in his heart the budding of those better principles which had begun to spring up, and threw him back a bitter partisan into the hands of the disaffected, whose schemes, though somewhat retarded by the outbreak of the Trades-union, were now becoming ripe for execution.

CHAPTER XIX.

Physical, alias Brute Force.

They bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free:
Licence they mean, when they cry *liberty;*
For who loves that must first be wise and good:
But from that mark how far they rove we see,
For all their waste of wealth and loss of blood.

MILTON.

AT length the time was fixed by the Chartists for the rising. The objects proposed by the leaders of the insurrection were, to seize the town of Laxington, disarm the soldiers, put the magistrates into coal-pits, and then raise the standard of Chartism; expecting that their example would be followed generally in the manufacturing districts. It was a dark and stormy night, and large bodies of men were collecting on the hills; the place of rendezvous was a spacious and dilapidated barn, about a mile and a half from Laxington. The scene was indeed strange and terrible:—a band of ferocious men, armed as best they were able; some with rusty firelocks; some with swords and pitchforks, and bludgeons, or hammers used for breaking stones on the road; some with dirks or knives; some flushed with intoxication; some with faces blackened,—such was

the hideous spectacle which the barn, dimly lighted with a few lanterns, presented. Alas! are these the men whose forefathers were England's bold peasantry, their country's pride — the loyal, honest, and industrious dwellers in our villages and hamlets; the men who worshipped God in their parish churches, and there learned their duty to God and man — learned to respect the rights of their neighbours, as well as to protect their own? What can have thus changed their character and very nature? What but LIBERALISM? Liberalism, which, if God check it not, will ere long efface all traces of virtue and civilisation from our land.

As Charles Lever looked on the wild scene, and saw the furious, half-drunken men around him, a thought struck him, on which he could not help dwelling. They appeared to him like a band of savage Indians about to rush down upon some colony of peaceful settlers, of which he had often read. Where was the difference between these nineteenth-century men of England, and the red savages of the far West? See their rude weapons, their wild demeanour, and infuriated conduct. Look at that man who is their leader. Put but a buffalo's hide on his shoulders, instead of a Mackintosh cloak; give him a scalping-knife, or a tomahawk, instead of his brace of detonating pistols; and how would he differ in moral worth from the Pawnee chief? Yes, thought Lever, and a sneer curled his lip, there is one difference. The Indian will fight

till he slays his enemies, or is slain; but that man will run away at the first shot.

As Lever was indulging in these melancholy and cynical reflections, a tumult was heard on the outside of the barn, and a shout was raised from a number of voices, "A spy! a spy!" Presently a man, having on a yeoman's uniform, was dragged in, amidst the threats and ridicule of the insurgents. Charles at once recognised in the captive yeoman his old friend and companion George Franklin. "We caught this fellow," said they, "prowling in the lane close by; there was another with him, but he got off."

"Hang him, hang him for a spy!" cried a dozen voices at once.

"Stop," said Bullyer, "let me ask a few questions of the prisoner. What is your name?"

"George Franklin," said the yeoman, in a firm voice.

"What! the son of that old Tory rogue at Rickerscote Grange?"

"I am the son of an honest man," continued Franklin, in the same undaunted tone.

"How came you here?"

"I was on duty."

"On duty were you? pray who sent you?"

George Franklin had been sent to reconnoitre and gain intelligence, but was resolved not to betray the plans of the magistrates.

"I was summoned to-day with the yeomanry, as it is well known, to Laxington."

"Why did you leave Laxington?" asked Bullyer; "were you sent to watch us?"

George Franklin held his peace, and resolutely refused to answer.

"Hang him, hang him for a spy!" cried out several voices amongst the mob.

"Shoot him, that's shortest," said a drunken wretch, at the same time cocking a rusty firelock which he held in his hand. Bullyer in vain endeavoured to keep him back. He had brought the insurgents together; but, as will commonly happen, was utterly unable to control their mad violence. Already was the ruffian's weapon presented to the yeoman's breast,—another moment would have ended his life by the murderer's hand,—when Charles Lever dashed aside the weapon, and stood between his friend and the drunken rioter.

"What!" said he, "shoot a defenceless prisoner! kill an unarmed man!"

"He is a spy! he is a spy!" cried several voices at once.

"Who has proved him to be a spy?" said Lever. "Will you condemn a man before he is tried?"

"Better do that," said a surly voice, "than let him go and betray us."

"Fool!" said Lever, "how can he betray us, if we keep him a prisoner. Let us take him with us, and he can do us no harm. Never kill an unarmed man. Let us keep our valour for the soldiers, when we meet them."

This appeal had considerable effect on the savage crew. Englishmen are not usually cruel, and shrink from the unnecessary effusion of blood, except when urged on by drunkenness, or some mad excitement. Woe to those who shall goad them on to excesses, and excite passions which oceans of blood may not extinguish!

While the fate of the prisoner was thus in suspense, the attention of the insurgents was providentially diverted by a new incident. A rocket was seen suddenly to shoot upwards in the heaven, on the farther side of the town of Laxington. It paused for a moment, when it reached its highest point, then burst into a thousand falling fragments, which seemed to glare frightfully over the devoted town. It was the signal for the attack. The leader immediately gave orders that the signal should be answered. A moment of suspense ensued, and then a loud whizzing sound was heard; but by some mismanagement, the rocket which was fired took an oblique direction, and lodged in the roof of the barn. The wind being high, the thatch was soon kindled into a blaze, which forced the insurgents, after some vain efforts to extinguish it, to consult their safety, by leaving the flaming building.

The time was now come for the attack. By the light of the blazing barn, Bullyer marshalled his men in three divisions; first, those armed with firelocks; then the sword and pikemen; and last, the bludgeonmen. The light, which enabled him to make his

arrangements, shewed him, at the same time, that the number of those assembled fell far short of what he had expected. However, it was too late to retract. They marched on for about half a mile, and then arrived at the main road. Here they doubled their front, and proceeded in a close column, which occupied the breadth of the road,—stopping, however, at every cottage or house which they passed, and forcing the men, contrary to their will, to join them. Such is the inconsistency of those who are loudest in their cry for freedom!

They had now arrived at the bridge which crossed the river just by Rickerscote Grange, when they discerned by the imperfect light, as it appeared, a small body of horsemen in the middle of the road, and a voice commanded them to halt.

"Who goes there?" cried Bullyer, in a loud though somewhat tremulous tone.

"I command you in the Queen's name to stop!" said a voice, which Bullyer at once recognised to be that of one of the county magistrates. "Stop, or we shall take measures to compel you!"

At these words a very unpleasant sensation began to spread amongst the rioters. Now that they found themselves for the first time in actual collision with an armed force, hundreds of them heartily wished themselves at home in their own peaceful cottages, and cursed their folly for having been deceived into meddling with politics, and braving the terrors of the law. But there was no time to consider.

"Never fear, my lads!" said Bullyer, "there is not a score of them. First rank, present arms; fire!"

The first rank accordingly fired, but with so bad aim that little or no damage was done. The fire was immediately returned, not only by the cavalry in front, but a volley was poured at the same moment from a body of soldiers concealed behind a low wall which flanked them on the left. This unexpected attack at once destroyed the small portion of courage which the insurgents possessed. It is remarkable, that though the English in a good cause, and under the command of officers in whom they have confidence, are the bravest men alive, yet none are greater cowards when engaged in what they know is wrong.

In the present instance they threw down their arms and fled in all directions, leaving several of their number dead and wounded behind them; and amongst them Lever, who was struck in the head by a musket-shot.

Though the rebels were dispersed in this quarter, the magistrates had not been equally successful elsewhere. Sleeping in blind security, the government had sent no additional troops to the disaffected districts; and the small force at the disposal of the magistrates was but just sufficient to check the approach of the insurgents in this direction; while they had received no intelligence, until it was too late, of the advance of an equally formidable column from the opposite

side. The insurgents from the north side entered the town without opposition, except from a few special constables; whose attempts to oppose them, instead of being of any avail, only served to exasperate them the more. The first object of attack was the town-hall. This they easily forced open; and having liberated a sheepstealer and a pickpocket, who were confined in the gaol below, proceeded to turn their attention to a bin of wine, which belonged to the town-council;—for, notwithstanding the abuse heaped on the old corporation for guzzling and drinking, the newly elected members had already fallen into the same errors.

The mob in the street without were soon aware of the good fortune of their companions, and saw no reason why they should not help themselves to the stores of a Tory publican, who happened to live next door to the town-hall. Bang went the sledge-hammers, and crash went the doors; the barrels were tapped, and the liquor was flowing copiously, in almost as short a time as it requires to relate it.

Emboldened by impunity, and maddened by intoxication, the mob next turned their attention to the adjoining house, which was a ladies' bonnet-shop. The infuriated rioters, increased in numbers by many drunken women, rushed into the house and laid exulting hands on the finery which was spread profusely around. And you might see at once the most ridiculous and the most shocking sights,—drunken amazons bearing on their heads the most elegant

head-dresses, and even the swarthy face of colliers shaded by nodding ostrich-plumes. The mistress of the shop and her poor female apprentices with difficulty escaped from the house, half naked and insulted, crying loudly for protection.

Next to the straw-bonnet maker's was another shop, over which was written, in large characters, LEVER AND SON. It was in vain to tell the infuriated mob that the Levers, both father and son, were stanch liberals; they were too mad and drunk to care for friend or foe; and already the sledge-hammers were thundering at the door.

Poor Mr. Lever, when the town was attacked, had expected that, of course, his son would have come and saved his property from harm. When the town-hall was taken, he hoped that the rioters would be satisfied; and was not a little alarmed to see them attack his neighbour at the George;—but then he was a Tory, and it was natural the mob should be eager for something to drink after their night's work. Mr. Lever's alarm was doubly increased when he saw the mob plundering the straw-bonnet warehouse, and plainly perceived that they were in no condition to distinguish between friend and foe. What could he do, or whither could he fly? His poor wife clung to him in terror; his shopmen looked aghast; the maid-servants wrung their hands; and he himself was at his wit's end. In this extremity, the only chance of safety which appeared, was to lock up himself and family in the cellar, in the hope of escaping notice.

He had not lain there long, when, through the iron grating, he saw the glare of flames issuing from the town-hall; and the dreadful thought occurred to him, that if his own house took fire, he and his family should be baked alive or suffocated. He resolved to leave his hiding-place; but at that moment a thundering noise was heard at the entrance, and the crashing of the timbers told him that his door was burst inwards. He gave himself up for lost, and prepared to meet his fate; but to his surprise, the mob seemed to pause. A few moments of suspense, —and then he heard the sound of horse-hoofs galloping up the street, and a cry rose from the mob— "The soldiers! the soldiers!"

Never was John Lever more delighted than to hear the approach of the soldiers, whom he had been used so often to rail against as the tools of tyrants and oppressors. A complete change had come over his feelings. He blessed God, who had given us rulers, and placed the sword of power in their hands; and *from that moment John Lever was a Conservative.*

CHAPTER XX.

The Causes of Discontent.

Have we not track'd the felon home, and found
His birthplace and his dam? The country mourns—
Mourns because every plague that can infest
Society, and that saps and worms the base
Of th' edifice that policy has raised,
Swarms in all quarters, meets the eye, the ear,
And suffocates the breath at every turn.
Profusion breeds them. COWPER.

DREADFUL indeed was the scene on which the morning sun rose in the hitherto peaceful town of Laxington. The venerable town-hall was a heap of blackened ruins; the houses near it plundered, or, as it is emphatically called, *gutted*, and the goods and furniture strewed about in wild confusion. The street was unoccupied, save by a few soldiers and policemen, who were searching for and removing the sufferers in the last night's horrid work. Several dead and wounded men had been found lying in the streets; others were brought in from the country; others were dragged up from the cellars and ruined houses, some drunken, some dead, some mangled, burnt, and disfigured. These were laid out on biers in the church, to be claimed by their respective friends. And bitter were the lamentations of wives and parents over the dead bodies of their husbands and sons,

whom, when they might, they had not dissuaded from their wicked and frantic undertaking.

For several days Laxington was like a deserted town—the shops shut, the streets empty. During this time the magistrates were sitting, to examine witnesses and commit prisoners for trial. Then came the special commission, the judge entering in state, and the sheriff with his javelin-men; and then followed the solemn trial of the offenders before their country's tribunal, not unmixed with many unworthy accompaniments, as the chicanery of lawyers and equivocation of witnesses, together with much political acrimony. Then came the conviction, and last of all the EXECUTION. For lenient measures in other places having failed to allay the spirit of insubordination, it was resolved by the government that the outraged law must take its course. Alas! if punishment had been awarded where most due, it would have fallen on the heads of those who had encouraged, for their own selfish purposes, the principles which begat the crime, rather than on the poor dupes who committed it.

We must not pass on from these melancholy events without a few reflections on the condition of a nation in the heart of which such scenes as those described have become of not unfrequent occurrence. A modern writer[1] has justly described these deeds of darkness and outbreaks of violence

[1] See Thomas Carlyle on Chartism.

as the symptoms of a wide-spread disease, which has infected the body politic; signs of a "black, mutinous discontent," which corrodes the hearts of the people. The lower classes, as he truly says, deem themselves "unjustly dealt by;" and until this feeling be removed, no peace or safety can be expected. The grand question is, how to effect this most desirable object. Some state-doctors would say, yield to the demands of the people, and then they will be satisfied—which is very questionable; others would rather advise that they should be coerced with a strong arm, and forced to submit. The more reasonable, safe, and charitable plan appears to be, to search carefully into their condition; to ascertain, first, whether their discontent has or has not any just ground; secondly, whether their grievances are remediable or not; and having done this, to take at once such measures as may be best calculated to heal those grievances which are remediable, and enable them to endure what are beyond human control.

Some confusion has arisen with regard to this most deeply important subject, from not considering that there are two distinct classes of discontented persons, whose cases are widely different from each other. First, there are those who are really liable to suffer privation from inadequate or irregular means of subsistence; secondly, those who have ample wages to procure for them the necessaries, comforts, and even luxuries of life, and yet are discontented. With one

class it is what has been termed a knife-and-fork question; with the other, a moral or political affair. Statesmen and economists do not appear to have kept this distinction sufficiently in view, but to have mixed up, in their arguments and measures, the one class with the other.

The main cause of the discontent of the former class is the irregularity of their wages, which are at all times low, in consequence of the fluctuation of commerce. To remove or greatly mitigate this evil is clearly hopeless. Those politicians who think, by any means, to ensure a constant prosperity of commerce, waste their time in a fruitless labour. Alternate prosperity and depression is an essential feature of a wide-extended commerce, supplied by an unlimited machinery, and dependent on foreign markets. It may be looked on as a dispensation of Providence analogous to those fluctuations of natural supplies which we find in many other countries. The northern tribes, for instance, who roam through the frozen regions, are subject to alternate abundance and scarcity of food; and they lay up, accordingly, what stores they are able in the time of abundance, to meet their inevitable necessities. The Indians who live under the tropics are during certain months deluged with rain, and then parched with drought; and in order to alleviate the latter evil, they make large tanks or reservoirs to catch the water, and keep it for the time of drought. In the temperate regions of the earth this natural vicissitude of abundance and scarcity is much

less inconveniently felt; at least by those nations whose population is principally employed in agriculture or home-trade. But we in England have, by our extensive commerce, created an unnatural fluctuation. Our machinery is able to produce commodities more than sufficient for the supply of all foreign nations who are willing to trade with us; and when the markets are glutted, as they will be, by our over-abundant powers of supply, then, of necessity, the demand ceases, and there is a want of employment for our labourers. It is the price we pay for our wealth and power; it is a condition to which we have brought ourselves, or to which circumstances have brought us,—and there is no help for it. To effect a regularity of demand amongst foreign nations, who are independent of us, is a thing impracticable. The Indian might as well endeavour to regulate the supply of rain from heaven, or the Esquimaux to force the seals and the elks to cease their annual migrations, as the English economist to ensure a regularity of foreign trade. Therefore, since it is impossible to prevent fluctuation, we must provide against it. *We must make our tanks* to catch the surplus rain. Savings-banks, provident clubs, benefit-societies, are so many tanks. Poor-laws are a species of tank, but their waters are of the bitterest. A fat pig is a sort of tank, which gathers up the earnings of the frugal labourer or mechanic, and saves them from being absorbed in the beer-shop or gin-shop, so as

to insure him a certain supply of food in the season when he most wants it.

All these modes of husbanding resources, especially those of a voluntary nature, should be encouraged and promoted, as the only practical means of remedying the evils of fluctuating employment. In cases of unusual pressure, poor-law relief should be mercifully and justly administered; and private charity should be largely dispensed, especially through the instrumentality of the Church. The Church is the best instrument of those charities, which serve to knit together the different classes of society in the bonds of mutual love. But it is manifest that, for their own sake, the poor should be induced as much as possible to rely on their own resources. Though alms should be freely administered to the distressed, yet it is not good for them to be accustomed to *rely* on alms. Instead of depending on the charity of their neighbours, they should rather be taught to labour with their hands, that they may have to give to those who need. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Nor is that independence wholesome which consists in neither giving nor receiving.

This leads us to the only surely effective remedy, namely, to instil into the people sound Christian principles, and train them in frugal and provident habits, by the aid of that religion which God has given for our guidance and comfort. *This is the only really efficacious instrument to which the statesman or the*

philanthropist has to look. Train up the people as Christians, and you make them self-denying and temperate in prosperity, patient and peaceable in adversity. Suffer them to remain as they are, and they will too often squander in gin and tobacco every farthing they can get, even to the starving of their children; and when the day of adversity comes, they will cry aloud for food, and grudge if they be not satisfied.

But it is not amongst the poorer people that the chief discontent exists; nor is it among them that those crimes abound which have of late years disgraced the English name. It is amongst workmen in comparatively good circumstances, earners of from twenty to thirty shillings a week, or in many cases much more,—amongst them, even more than amongst the poor, it is that there exists "a black mutinous discontent," and a feeling of being dealt unjustly by. The first question is, Have these men reason to be dissatisfied? I fear some of my conservative readers will be rather startled by the avowal, that I verily believe *they have much reason for their discontent*, and that their discontent naturally and inevitably results from the manner in which they are treated, or rather neglected, by their superiors in station.

As far as regards the mere wants and requirements of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter, their discontent is obviously unreasonable. It is very doubtful whether any arrangement of society could secure to the working classes a larger share

of comforts than these men have at their command. They might live, each in the midst of his family, happy, peaceful, and respectable; eating the bread of honest labour, and passing through a quiet life to a happy eternity. But, alas, how different is their actual condition from what it might be! We will not venture to describe it.

What then is the cause of their discontent and unhappiness? It is simply this, that *their minds are fed on poison instead of wholesome food.* A "mind diseased" is their real ailment. Untrained in sound moral principles, without religious education or instruction; left to their own guidance, or to the choice of their own instructors, they are the easy victims of the demagogue or the infidel, who irritate, perplex, and delude them. And hence naturally they are discontented, and, in one sense, justly so; *because those who ought to have seen them instructed in sound knowledge and religion, and to have guided them by their example, have not done their duty by them.* They should present petitions by scores to their rulers; but their petitions should not be for annual parliaments, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and such like nonsensical objects, which cannot benefit them in the slightest degree, but only complete their ruin, by throwing them entirely on their own resources, and depriving those who now are able to help them, of the power of doing so. But I will tell them what should be the subject of their petition, if they desire really to improve their condition. The

following may serve as a summary of the topics on which they would do well to address the legislature:

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament now assembled, the humble petition of the skilled and able-bodied Workmen of England,

SHEWETH,

That your petitioners are skilful and able workmen in various departments of trade and manufacture now flourishing in England; that they are in the receipt of higher wages than their fathers and forefathers were able to earn; that the necessaries of life are not excessive in price; and that various comforts and conveniences are cheaper and more easily attainable than heretofore; so that they are able to obtain a larger share of worldly advantages than has probably ever fallen to the lot of the working classes in any age or country; and yet, nevertheless, that your petitioners are restless, dissatisfied, miserable, and unhappy; their families in ill condition, and their homes uncomfortable.

Your petitioners earnestly pray your honourable house to take their unhappy condition into your serious consideration, with a view to afford such remedy as to your honourable house may seem likely to correct the evils under which your petitioners labour.

It has been many times urged upon your petitioners, by learned and pious men, that the holy

Scriptures have been given by the great Ruler of heaven and earth, to furnish the means of comfort and guidance to all degrees of persons; that certain ministers have been divinely appointed to teach the will of God; and that the ordinances and laws of religion, if duly received, are able to convey such spiritual benefit as shall render the minds of men grateful for the blessings which they enjoy, and enable them to lead a peaceful and happy life in this world, and obtain eternal happiness in the world to come.

If your honourable house believes that such is really the effect of the Christian religion rightly received, your petitioners earnestly pray that the benefits of such religion may be afforded to them. And they humbly suggest the following means whereby this inestimable blessing may be secured to them.

First, the building of a sufficient number of churches, in proportion to the vast increase of the population, in which your petitioners may be taught the way of peace and truth; and may learn to exercise self-denial in good times, and patience in evil times; and obey the laws of God and man; and to be peaceable one amongst another; and live as faithful, humble, and contented Christians.

But, forasmuch as, from want of habit, it may be found that the population of places so long neglected will not at once frequent the churches erected for them, your petitioners humbly pray,

that a sufficient number of able and pious clergy may be appointed—namely, one at least for every thousand souls; who, by the authority of their divine mission, and by Christian kindness and persuasion, may induce the said population to avail themselves of the opportunities afforded them of learning the will of God, and worshipping in His consecrated house.

Your petitioners especially pray, that the churches so built may be open at an early hour, before the ordinary time of work, and also after their day's labour, in order that they may not only attend to the preaching of the word, but resort thereto for daily worship.

Your petitioners also humbly pray your honourable house to cause schools of religious instruction, with able, sound, and pious masters, to be established, for the nurture of their children in the fear of God, and in habits of obedience and self-control, lest they also come to the same unhappy state as their parents.

Your petitioners also humbly pray, that your honourable house, if it should see fit, will intercede for them by an address to her majesty the Queen, in order that such able and right-principled magistrates may be appointed, as shall, by their authority and wisdom, discountenance all vice, turbulence, and immorality, which now, through laxity in the administration of the laws, has arrived at fearful excess.

Your petitioners also humbly pray, that the laws

of the land may be strictly put in force against all utterers of seditious, blasphemous, and immoral statements or opinions, whether by word or printing, whereby your petitioners have been heretofore much deluded and led astray.

Also that your honourable house will be pleased to put such a duty as may amount to a prohibition on the sale of gin and other poisonous and deleterious liquors; your petitioners having found by experience, that owing to the abundance of their wages and the cheapness of such liquors, they are unable to resist the temptation of indulging to an excess which they well know is pernicious to the health both of their souls and bodies.

Lastly, your petitioners humbly pray your honourable house will give your support only to such ministers of the crown as shall take speedy and effectual steps to promote the foregoing measures; on which your petitioners confidently believe that their own welfare and that of the country depends. And your petitioners will ever pray, &c. &c.

Such is the sort of petition which, if they knew their real interests, the operative classes would present to parliament. Of course to many persons such a petition appears extravagant and fantastical. But I would challenge any one to prove that there is in it a single suggestion which, if really acted on, would not tend to the great advantage of the class of which we are speaking, and indeed of the whole nation.

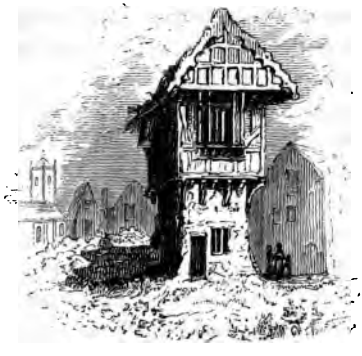
To petition for churches and schools, and for the interference of the legislature to prevent the promulgation of lies and blasphemies, appears to us strange only from the prejudices in the midst of which we are living. Is it not a mere prejudice, to think that the freedom of the press, for instance, will be interfered with by the suppression of sedition and immorality? We have a free trade in butcher's meat and fish; but when the policeman finds the butcher in Smithfield selling unwholesome meat, or the fishwoman putrid fish, he most properly takes the offender before the Lord Mayor, who orders the unwholesome food to be destroyed, and punishes the vendors. Does any one call this an infringement on the liberty of the subject? Why, then, should poisonous newspapers or books be suffered unrepressed to contaminate the public mind? Why does the magistrate allow the circulation of such pernicious stuff? Simply because we have got a prejudice into our heads, that it would interfere with the liberty of the press. As if liberty consisted in people being allowed to poison each other. If any one thing in political economy is certain, it is this, — that it is only by providing wholesome aliment for the minds of the people, instead of suffering them to live on the poison which they now imbibe, that a healthy state of the body politic can be effected. The disease is moral, — our remedy must be adapted to their complaint; and *for diseases of the mind there is no other remedy than God's true religion.*

Instruct them in the laws of God; lead them in the pleasant paths of the gospel of peace; teach them to worship God, and obey Him and serve Him as He has commanded; then will they be at peace, and their souls will be at rest. If the government will not perform their duty, then it is the more incumbent on all Christian men to put their shoulders to the wheel. Great sacrifices must be made by all classes, if we hope to recover the ground which has been lost — great sacrifices both of time and wealth; but that which above all things is required is *example* and *sympathy*. Let the rich shew that they look upon the poor as their brethren in Christ. Let the wealthy landowner or millowner provide for the spiritual wants of those dependent on them,—visit them in their houses, and worship with them in their churches: let them join with the clergy in attending carefully to their condition; encouraging them in habits of order and frugality; discountenancing vice; and above all, training up their children in the fear of God;—these are the only means — and these are certain means — whereby the wounds of the body politic may be healed, and the plague stayed.

Much is being done even now. A good spirit has arisen among the operatives themselves; they are beginning to see their real interests, and to receive with gratitude that counsel which is afforded them. But much yet remains to be done, before a sound spirit can be again infused into the mass of the people; and the aid and the prayers of every good

man is needed to accomplish this most urgent and necessary work.

But it is time to turn from these speculations, and proceed with the thread of our narrative.



CHAPTER XXI.

The wounded Socialist.

O sir, to wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters.
SHAKSPEARE,—*King Lear.*

In a clean and quiet room of a pleasant farm-house, the windows of which looked into a neat garden, and admitted the refreshing fragrance of the rose and the jasmine, two females were engaged in attendance upon a sick man, who lay, with his head bandaged, apparently in a dying state. It was Charles Lever, who had been carried to the house of Farmer Franklin after the fatal rencontre with the soldiers. For many days, nay for weeks, he had been hovering between life and death; his body powerless and emaciated, his mind sometimes in a state of torpor, sometimes wandering and restless. One while a throbbing, burning pain would torture his fevered brow, and he would imagine he was struggling in some fierce conflict, in which he could make no progress, or grasping at some object which he could never reach; then the burning pain would subside, and he would fancy he heard sweet voices—his mother talking with him, as she was wont to talk in early

childhood; then another gentle and kind voice would seem to speak, and that caused the blood again to flow more rapidly, and the throbbing to begin afresh.

It was about three weeks after the fatal night of the insurrection, when Charles Lever at last began to recover his senses. A sharp pain had shot across his forehead, which was succeeded by a pleasant sensation of coolness. Charles slowly opened his eyes, and they fell on the beautiful face of Margaret Franklin, who had been binding up his wounded head, and was now smoothing his pillow.

"Dear Margaret," said he, in a low and tremulous voice, "how kind it is of you thus to watch over me! I have often fancied that I heard your voice, and was not sure whether it was a dream or a reality; but now I see that it is you indeed."

"O how glad I am to hear you talk like yourself," said Margaret in delight; "and how glad your mother will be! But, hush! you must not speak: Dr. Chambers said, that if you recovered your speech, you must on no account be permitted to talk, or to exert yourself in any way."

So saying Margaret hastened from the room, with the joyful intelligence that Charles had at length come to himself. Mrs. Lever immediately entered with a glad countenance, and took her son's hand and pressed it to her lips, and wept over it; begging, at the same time, that he would keep quite still. From that time Charles continued to amend. Margaret seldom entered the room, but her light step was often heard in

the adjoining apartment. His mother was constant in her attendance upon her son; and as his mind became able to bear it, she answered his anxious inquiries respecting the events which had taken place since the time of his being wounded. The principal of his associates had suffered for their offence on the scaffold, or had been transported; others had escaped and left the country. Inquiry had been made for him, and his retreat discovered; but his friend George Franklin having represented his almost hopeless condition, and, in a private conference with the magistrate, having stated that he owed his own life to Charles's interference, no warrant had been issued out against him; and it was understood that his part in the affair would be passed over.

Relieved as Charles's mind was in some degree by this intelligence, other and more serious thoughts began to crowd upon him. Adversity is a stern teacher; sickness and the fear of death are eloquent admonitors. As he lay in his bed, fearful of a relapse, without power of limb or muscle, bitter reflections forced themselves upon him. He thought on his sinful life, his abject condition, his escape — and that not even certain — from an ignominious death, which had been the fate of some of his companions. He could not but feel that he also deserved the same punishment; and though he might be spared from the condemnation of a human judge, was there not One before whom he must one day appear to give an account of his works? The words of the preacher,

the solemn declaration of God's word, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous, *doubtless there is a God which judgeth the earth*,"—which even before had sunk into his heart, now presented themselves to his mind with redoubled force. How soon might he be called on to stand before his God! He had never been a decided infidel, though a sceptic; and now his flimsy arguments and reasons were scattered before the tribunal even of common sense. He felt his enormous sin and danger, and he prayed; he prayed as he had been wont to do, when a child before his mother's knees, and God heard his prayers.

It may be supposed that his mother perceived with delight the favourable change which had come over his thoughts; and to the extent of her abilities she administered to his instruction. But her efforts were now assisted by a third person. Mr. Morton had many times called to inquire after the wounded sufferer; and was now gratified to hear that his mind was sufficiently restored to admit of a visit from him, and that he was, indeed, most anxious to see him.

The minister of the Church approached the bedside of the sick man, and kindly inquired after his health.

"Alas, sir, my life hangs but by a thread; though God has mercifully spared me as yet, and I am something recovered, yet, weak and powerless as I am, I feel I may relapse and go off in a moment. All I pray is, that God may allow me time to repent."

Mr. Morton was delighted to find his patient in

this frame of mind—aware of his danger, and anxious to seek God.

"I see, my poor friend," said he, "that affliction has had the effect which a merciful God designs it should have, of bringing home the thoughts to Him. I pray God that He will finish the good work which He has begun in you."

"Oh, sir," said the sick man, "I fear you know not the deep guiltiness of him whom you look on, or you would not speak thus encouragingly. I have led a life of presumptuous sin; I have scoffed at religion, and even denied or doubted the existence of a God. But I now feel," said he, shuddering, "that there is a God who rules above, and that I shall have to give Him an account of my works. I can no longer doubt it, if I would; the terrors of the judgment even now hang over me; the pains of hell seem to have begun on earth;" and as he spoke, large drops of sweat started on his brow, while his flushed cheek and quivering eye shewed the intensity of his sufferings. "Oh, sir, save me from these horrible thoughts!"

Mr. Morton, though not unused to scenes like this, was deeply moved by Lever's agony of spirit, and inwardly prayed that God would aid his words.

"My poor sufferer," said he, "the same holy Scripture which tells us of God and of a judgment to come, tells us also of One who hath shed His blood to save us."

"Ah, sir," said the sick man eagerly, "if I could

but believe in that Saviour! if I could but obtain His mercy!—but oh, how sinful, how unworthy am I!"

"Talk not of worthiness," said the Christian minister; "no one of himself is worthy to obtain mercy and forgiveness; but it is written, 'When the wicked man turneth from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.'"

"These are indeed comfortable words—they used to be familiar to me when a child; but I have long ceased to think of them."

"The more need is there that they should be brought back to your memory. Let me read some more of God's gracious promises."

Mr. Morton then read from the Gospel of St. Luke the parable of the prodigal son and of the lost sheep, enforcing them on the mind of the patient by such comments as he judged suitable.

"And is God indeed so merciful?" said Lever, when the clergyman had ceased reading; "is He indeed so merciful as to receive back a sinner like me as soon as he will turn to Him?"

"Doubt not His mercy," said Mr. Morton; "doubt not that, like the good father in the parable, He will come forth a great way with open arms to meet those who truly turn unto Him, even though they have squandered their baptismal inheritance. But let me not deceive you with the im-

pression that repentance is nothing more than the mere calling on God for forgiveness. We may not limit God's mercy; neither may we speak of it as so readily obtained, that no pains or efforts are required on the sinner's part. Lying on the bed of sickness and in the fear of death, the humbled sinner anxiously catches at every ray of hope; and far be it from me to say that God's mercy has not accepted those who repent at the last, if they do in truth repent. But the test of true repentance is, if God should restore you to the world in strength and health: much then there will be for you to do to shew that your repentance is real. If you have fallen far from grace, proportionably long and difficult may be the task of repentance, before God shall restore you to a holy frame. What we now must do, is to pray earnestly for the aid of His Spirit, without which we are as nothing."

Mr. Morton then knelt by the bedside of the sick man, and offered up prayers for God's merciful aid; in which Charles joined, as well as he was able after so long disuse. Alas, it is a hard thing for one who has ceased to pray, to begin again his unaccustomed duty. But God is merciful to the contrite sinner; He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

Many visits did the wounded man receive from his excellent counsellor; and much comfort did he derive from conversing with his kind mother. So that, as his bodily health daily improved, his spi-

ritual comfort increased; and his hope of mercy, and resolution to lead a new life, increased with it; though his spiritual advancement was not unaccompanied at times with dark thoughts and gloomy forebodings, such as those must expect who have wandered far in the ways of ungodliness.

CHAPTER XXII.

Return to the Church.

Thou shalt thy sinful self deplore;
Thy worldly wisdom still unlearning,
Still to a Father's house returning:
* * * * *
So daily may'st thou less become
In thine own eyes; and thus beguiled
Into the likeness of a child,
The narrow gate shall give thee room.

The Cathedral.

After a while, Charles Lever was so far recovered as to leave his sick room, and mix with the good and hospitable family under whose roof the providence of God had brought him. He joined in their family prayers, and conversed often with his worthy host on religious subjects. Franklin was a true member of the Church of Christ; at the same time he was a real Bible Christian. If he had not been the one, he would not have been the other. He was one who walked calmly onward under the guidance of the Church. He loved her sacraments and ordinances, and reverenced her ministers; while he drew continually fresh streams of grace from the fountain-head, and daily read the holy Scriptures, as the standard of life and doctrine. And it was the har-

mony and identity between the teaching of the one and the other, which gave him a sure confidence that he was walking in the right path.

Old John Lever often came to visit his son during his illness. John was an altered man; his spirit was subdued, and his pride and obstinacy of heart were broken by his misfortunes. The imminent danger and almost hopeless condition of his only son, whom, notwithstanding their differences, he still loved with a father's fondness; the disgrace which might have befallen him; the dreadful thought that, but for God's mercy, he might have suffered on the gallows with the rest of his companions, (and if such an event had happened, John Lever had just that sort of sensitive spirit that he would never have held up his head again,)—all these things weighed upon his mind; and sober reflection forced upon him the conviction, that he himself had been the principal cause of his son's disgrace and misfortunes; that the way in which he had trained his youth had, as a natural result, led to all the sad consequences which had followed. He called to mind how he had taken a pride in his son's cleverness, rather than his obedience; how he had taught him to cavil, rather than submit; and encouraged in him a proud, rebellious, self-willed spirit. He remembered well his son's declaration: "*If you choose to leave the church, why may not I choose to leave the chapel?*" The words recurred again and again to his mind, and he became conscious that his own example had been

mainly instrumental in bringing about the unhappy series of events which had befallen his family.

Humbled by these reflections, he was no longer too proud to consult with his old friend, but anxiously sought his advice. Franklin well remembered the time when he had warned him of the danger of his course, and had prophesied that the day would come when he would discover his error; but he was too wise to taunt his fallen and contrite friend, though at the same time too charitable not to speak plainly and openly. Instead of reminding him of his former obstinacy, he led him on in his present train of reflection. Lever was very indignant against the Socialists, who had first seduced his son from his religion. Franklin pointed out to him that not a single Churchman at Laxington had joined the Socialists, at least not one who had regularly attended the ordinances of the Church.

"Look at Mr. Morton's congregation," said he; "there is not a sheep missing from the fold. We know what we have to trust to; we keep to our Church from principle We believe that God has established it for our guidance and support, and do not consider ourselves at liberty to desert God's institution. When a man once takes it into his head that he may choose his own religion, what is there to hinder him from choosing one form of error any more than another, according as his ignorance or fancy may lead him? He may be a Dissenter to-day, a Socialist to-morrow."

"But," said Lever, still retaining his habit of arguing, though exercising it very differently from his former practice, "what if the Church bids us do what is contrary to God's law, or teaches us what is contrary to God's word?"

"In that case, which happily is not ours, a Christian is placed in a very different position. Of course he must obey God rather than man. If the Church bids him bow down to images, or worship saints, he must not obey, because God's law plainly forbids it. But this is not a case with which we in this country are at present much concerned. If we had lived three hundred years ago, it would have been a great trial to us, and much prayer for God's assistance would have been needed. Happily God directed the bishops and pastors of His Church in this country to purge away the corruption of popery, so that our forefathers had a straight path to pursue. The reformers of the English Church took the Bible for their standard, and the ancient Apostolic Church for their guide, and brought our doctrine and discipline into conformity with them; not destroying, but restoring; removing corruption, but retaining whatsoever was agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the primitive Church."

J. Lever. "I admit that the doctrines of the Church of England are according to holy Scripture, and I have no particular fault to find with her discipline."

"Fault!" said Franklin, interrupting him; "is it only that you do not find fault? That is scarcely a suitable expression, my good friend, to use with regard to a system which has been handed down from the Apostles, and has existed by God's providence for eighteen hundred years."

J. Lever. "Well, I only mean that I have nothing to say against the form of discipline used in the Church. I have always thought that the Church was at liberty to have bishops and priests, if she pleased. You, on the contrary, believe them to be of divine institution."

Franklin. "Certainly I do; it admits of satisfactory proof—as Mr. Morton has often shewn us, from the pulpit—that the external discipline of our Church is the same as that which was established by the Apostles in the Churches which they founded. It agrees entirely with what we find in Scripture, and is further confirmed by the universal consent of history; therefore I consider that we are not at liberty to change it. Besides, the ministers of the Church alone can shew that they have received any authority to administer the sacraments, which are generally necessary for salvation."

J. Lever. "Well, I dare say you are right. I never read the history of the early Church, and never heard our preacher speak of it; therefore cannot contradict you, if I wished. But I was going to observe, that what we Dissenters object to, is the

establishment of the Church. We find no precept in the Bible that the Church should be established by law."

Franklin. "Do you find any precept that forbids it?"

J. Lever. "Why, no, I cannot say that we do. Our Saviour said to Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world;' but I do not see that that has any thing to do with the Church of England; and I cannot call to mind any other text which alludes to the subject."

Franklin. "Do you not think that prophecy clearly points to the maintenance of the Church by human laws, which is the same thing as an establishment, where it declares that kings shall be its nursing-fathers, and their queens its nursing-mothers?"[1]

J. Lever. "Certainly that passage seems to apply very much to the existing state of the Church in England, though not so clearly as to make it imperative."

Franklin. "Surely it is imperative on every king or ruler, as it is on every other individual Christian, to use all his power and influence for the extension of God's kingdom upon earth. How can it be right for Christian kings and governors to withhold their influence in the promotion of Christ's true religion, when every other Christian is called on to do his utmost in the sacred cause? And what blame can possibly attach itself to the Church in using all lawful means in her power, and employ-

[1] Isaiah xlix. 23.

ing the aid of men in their public as well as in their private capacity for the furtherance of the truth?[2] However, the ground on which I would rather place the argument is this: I conceive it clearly enjoined in Scripture that all Christians dwelling in the same place should hold, or at least be willing to hold, communion with each other; should obey the same pastors; should worship together, and together partake of the holy sacrament. The Bible teaches us, as you may read in the first epistle to the Corinthians, and elsewhere, that *there is but one Church, and can be but one true communion in one place.* Well, then, what I ask is, *How can the circumstance of its being joined with the state make the true Church a wrong Church?* Here is a Church sound in doctrine, apostolic in discipline; how can it possibly alter the character of the Church, so far as to make it not the true Church, if it be joined to the state? At this rate, as soon as ever the government of any country endowed or established a Church, it ought to be the signal of all its members to desert her. Surely this is unreasonable. For myself, I think the union of the Church with the state is highly beneficial, and conducive to the spread of divine truth through the land, and the providing the ordinances of religion to thousands of poor souls who would else be left destitute. You may think otherwise, and deem that the Church is not so free and independent. But what I

[2] See Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. iii. p. 455, Oxford edition.

contend for is, that the Church, which, if not joined with the state, is the true Church, and that to which we should be joined, does not cease to be the true Church by being joined to the state. There is nothing in its altered condition, even though we may individually object to the arrangement, which makes it right or lawful for us to separate ourselves from it; and therefore, by so doing, we place ourselves in great danger.

"What has always appeared to me the strongest evidence of the necessity of keeping to the Church is this—*that God's ordained ministers alone can shew that they have received any commission to administer the holy sacraments.* We are taught that the sacraments are 'generally necessary for salvation;' we are sure that priests, who are lawfully ordained by the bishops, can administer them to us; but we have no reason to believe that any other person can; nay, rather, there is great reason to doubt it. See, then, the position in which the Dissenter places himself and his children. There is no certainty whether they have ever been baptized, or have ever partaken of the body and blood of Christ. If they have joined in any such ceremony, it may have been a mere mock-sacrament; not only ineffectual for the conveyance of grace to the soul, but highly offensive to God. Therefore, though a Dissenter differs ever so slightly, or though he does not differ at all, *in doctrine* from the Church, yet in leaving the *communion* of the Church, there is reason to fear lest

he may be cutting himself off from the means of grace which God has provided in His holy sacraments. The more one thinks of it, the more serious does the matter appear."

J. Lever. "I confess that what you say has often occurred to me, especially of late. I left the Church from very wrong motives; partly, if I remember right, because I did not like the preacher; but principally, as I now perceive, because I was wilful, and liked to have my own way. This objection against the Church being joined to the state never occurred to me till it was put into my head by others, and I confess I never could see the force of the argument; though, as I had chosen to leave the Church, it was necessary to have some arguments to bring forward, you know; and *for a man who has made up his mind to stick to his point, a bad argument will serve as well as a good one.* However, I have lately thought over these things, and seen them in a different light. What you have said confirms me in my resolution; and if I was wrong in leaving the Church, it is clearly right that I should go back to it."

"Oh do, do, dearest husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Lever, eagerly; "let us make up our minds at once. And why should we not go back openly, and let our neighbours see that we are not ashamed to do what is right?"

J. Lever. "Well, as I have as good as made up my mind, it may as well be done at once. So I'll go with you next Sunday to church, Franklin."

"Give me your hand, Lever," said Joseph Franklin; "and I am most happy to shake it as a fellow-churchman again. Only will you allow me," said he, still keeping hold of his hand, "will you allow me to add a few words of advice, such as one Christian should give to another?"

"Say on," said Lever. "I know I have been wrong, and am not too proud now to take advice, particularly from you."

Franklin. "You talk of going back to the Church, and right glad am I to hear it. But do you know that, in the ancient Church, the return of one who had separated himself from her communion was not accomplished without earnest seeking of pardon, and generally some public penance and humiliation? Such customs are not kept up in these days —at least not in our own Church—the more's the pity. Still, I think, my good friend, that a return to the Church, after so long a separation from her communion, should not be looked upon as the mere walking into a pew in the parish-church instead of the meeting-house. Though no public penance is required, yet you will do well to kneel before God, and seek His forgiveness with tears and humiliation."

"I will, I will, Joseph," said Lever, with more emotion than he had yet shewn. "And I will send and ask Mr. Morton's permission to partake of the holy communion the next time it is administered."

"Which I am sure he will willingly grant you,"

said Franklin; "and I think it will be a very proper way of shewing your repentance."

The next Sunday, accordingly, John Lever and his wife having obtained a formal permission from Mr. Morton, accompanied their friend to the altar, and so were again received into communion with the Church.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The earnest Penitent.

I bear upon my brow the sign
Of sorrow and of pain:
Alas! no hopeful cross is mine,
It is the mark of Cain.

The course of passion, and the fret
Of godless hope and fear—
Toil, care, and guilt—their hues have set,
And fixed their sternness there.

Saviour! wash out the imprinted shame;
That I no more may pine,
Sin's martyr; though not meet to claim
Thy cross, a saint of Thine.

Lyra Apostolica.

CHARLES LEVER had listened attentively to the conversation recorded in the last chapter, and had rejoiced in the decision at which his parents had arrived. Never in his remembrance had his father appeared more amiable and reasonable. Never had the sound principles and Christian spirit of Franklin been more evident and undeniable. Many similar conversations took place in that peaceful family; and Charles Lever felt the full influence of the scenes and associations amongst which he was placed.

There are some circles in which it would be hard to say that true religion did not exist—circles in which God is honoured, and Christ's name revered;

and yet there is a want of that true Christian temper, which, when rightly developed, is so attractive and winning. It is where the spirit of sectarianism has intruded its repulsive presence; where some narrow human system has been adopted, and has contracted the heart, and corroded the feelings, that this unamiable temper is found. In such circles the Christian, though of the same Church, yet not being of the same school or party, is met with frowns and coldness; and instead of being led onward by Christian sympathy, is discouraged and repulsed. There was nothing of this sort in Franklin or his family. Though refusing with uncompromising firmness to mix in close terms of intimacy with those whom God had commanded him to avoid — those, namely, who caused divisions contrary to the apostles' doctrine and fellowship; yet to all fellow-members of the Church his heart was free and open. He at once received back his old friends into his cordial intimacy, and unrestrained good-will again sprang up between the two families.

Amidst these scenes and associations, placed in the atmosphere of a Christian household, all the better feelings of Charles Lever's heart revived and expanded; his conviction of his own errors became daily fixed more deeply, his faith in Christ waxed stronger, and his resolutions of amendment more confirmed. The honest farmer was no less delighted to see his repentant spirit than his improving health; and conversed with him cordially, seeming to forget

his former aversion; and all the members of the family looked kindly on him.

Yet, amidst the blessing of penitence, and the comfort of improving health, there was a cloud still hanging over Lever's brow. Often would he gaze on the lovely Margaret, and suddenly avert his look with a deep and bitter sigh. And often, when, in the kindness of her heart, she rendered any little service to the feeble convalescent, he would receive it, one while with a transport of grateful emotion, and the next moment would suddenly check himself, and control the expression of his feelings. It was plain that something weighed on his mind. He was extremely anxious to leave the farmer's house, under the plea of relieving the family from the burden of attendance upon a sick man. But the pressing kindness of Franklin, and the assurance of the medical attendant, that it would be better for him to remain some while longer in the quiet farm-house, apart from the bustle of the town, had hitherto prevented him from putting his plan into effect, anxious as he evidently was to return.

At last his impatience could no longer be controlled. Though scarcely able yet to walk without support, he had, unknown to his kind host, ordered that a conveyance should be sent from Laxington to take him thither. Franklin's earnest entreaties were unavailing; Margaret's kind words seemed only to make Charles more resolute to depart. With downcast looks, and hasty, though warmly expressed,

thanks, he bade adieu to his hospitable friends. Leaning on the arm of George Franklin, he entered the car which waited for him at the door; and as he grasped the farmer's hand, he placed in it a packet, which he requested him to read after his departure.

As soon as the car had driven off, Franklin went to his inner room, and breaking open the seal, read as follows:

"Honoured Sir,

"It is not possible for me to express, in suitable terms, the deep gratitude which I feel for the kindness with which I have been treated by yourself and your excellent family. Would that I were worthier of your friendship! But, alas! you know not what a viper you have been cherishing. When I have told you all, you will at once perceive that the best return which I could make for your friendship was to leave your house without delay, and rid you of the presence of one who could only cause unhappiness to those whom he is most bound to love.

"I scarcely know how to unburden my mind, and make you acquainted with my painful secret. But when you consider that I have been a Socialist, and when you think of the licentiousness and depravity of such principles, you will be the less surprised at the confession which I am about to make to you. When under the infatuation of that horrible creed, which is, in fact, nothing more or less than the determination to give free indulgence to all the

vile and wicked passions of human nature, I formed a connexion with a young person, whom I first induced to adopt the same principles as myself, and then to yield to my passionate entreaties to live with me as my wife. And yet my heart had been given irrevocably to another; and it was more in anger and pique against your just displeasure, than from any other motive, that I entered into this Socialist connexion. On account of what we in our folly called the prejudices of the world, we agreed to conceal our union, which, I need not say, has not received the sanction either of religion or of law.

"Deeply indeed do I now repent my folly and madness; continually has the hated secret been rankling in my heart; and most anxious have I been to explain to you my circumstances; but until now, shame has prevented me from doing so. I have resolved, on mature deliberation, to endeavour, to the utmost of my power, to repair the wrong which I have done. It is my full determination at once to offer an honourable marriage to her whom I have so deeply injured; and to endeavour to guide in the paths of virtue and repentance one whom my example has hitherto led only into sin and folly.

"I hope and trust, my dear sir, that you will approve of the course which I am now about to take; and I leave it to you to announce to my kind friends, in such a manner as you may think most proper, the step which I have resolved on. To George the whole of the circumstances may be re-

lated; perhaps to others it will be enough to say, without further details, that I am about to enter into the marriage-state with one to whom I have been some time engaged.

"Let me conclude by entreating your forgiveness and your prayers. You know not the anguish of guilt and remorse. Pray for me, that I may have strength to do my duty resolutely under the trials that await me.

"Your penitent and obliged friend,

"CHARLES LEVER."

Charles Lever returned to his home with the full determination of putting in effect the plan which he had communicated to his kind friend. It was indeed a task most repulsive to him under his present feelings; but he deemed it a solemn duty, and would not shrink from it. His repugnance was even increased by the circumstance, that during his illness he had never once received any message from her whom he was about to make his wife. The secrecy of their union might have accounted for her not visiting him in person; still he thought that some kind message or letter might have been conveyed to him. The more he thought on these circumstances, the more he shuddered at the step which he was about to take. It may be imagined, therefore, what were his feelings, when he learned, upon inquiry, that on the day after the insurrection, she to whom he was about to make proposals of marriage had left

the country with the Socialist lecturer, and had not since been heard of.

To describe his mingled feelings at this intelligence would be impossible. One while he was filled with indignation, that the wretch whom he had made his friend should thus dare to seduce from him one whom he had called his own; then again a remorseful feeling would arise, that it was he himself who had been the real corrupter and seducer. At the same time a great load was removed from his mind; and he learned gradually to turn his thoughts to God with humble gratitude, who had so mercifully spared him, and given him a heart to desire to do His will. The great impediment to a course of holy living, which he had most feared, was now removed, and no external difficulty remained to his commencing a life of thorough repentance.

But, alas! a heavier blow was soon to fall upon him; a calamity which touched him to the quick more than any which had gone before. The reader has already been made acquainted with the attachment which had formerly subsisted between Charles and Margaret Franklin — an attachment which had only been broken off from a dutiful submission on her part to her father's wishes. Who can wonder that Margaret, again brought by circumstances into such close intimacy with one whom she had loved, perhaps *still* loved — employed daily in offices of kindness during his sickness — entirely ignorant of his unfortunate connexion — no longer reproved by

her father's frown, but viewing Charles as one reclaimed to the paths of honour and virtue,—should have allowed hopes long suppressed again to revive? And who that knows a woman's heart will be surprised that the sudden announcement of Lever's intended marriage with another should be a shock too heavy for one so tender and sincere to bear? Margaret said little, and vainly attempted to sustain her cheerfulness; but the rose fled from her cheek; the downcast eye, and the unconscious sigh which from time to time escaped from her bosom, told too plainly of her secret grief. Every attention which kindness could dictate was paid her by her father and brother, but in vain. A slight cold, then an affection of the lungs, was followed by a rapid consumption. And scarcely a few months elapsed, before Charles, with a broken and remorseful heart, followed her to the grave.

A full consciousness of the accumulated evils and disasters of which he had been the unhappy cause sank deep into Lever's heart; but falling on a spirit now humbled and sanctified, it only filled him with the more anxious desire to testify the sincerity of his repentance. He set himself in earnest to the work which lay before him. The more he read the word of God, and conversed with Mr. Morton, and communed with his own heart, the more he became convinced of the great mercy of God, and of the power and will of Christ to forgive and accept the worst of sinners. Still he did not conceal from himself that repentance is a hard, and long, and difficult task.

When the baptismal purity is blotted, and sin engrained in the heart, long is the struggle, and fierce the warfare, and anxious the watching, and lengthened the prayer, and frequent the fasting, before it can be eradicated. A whole life of self-denial and penitence is all too little to wear away the power of indwelling sin, and restore the soul to purity of thought and feeling. And though it might please God at once to put away the sin, for the sake of the all-atoning blood of Christ, shed for the guilt of the whole world, yet did it behove those who, like the repentant Psalmist, truly felt the enormity of their sin, and desired "a clean heart and a new spirit," to humble themselves before God with fasting and prayer; to "water their couch with tears;" to mortify and subdue the carnal desires and passions; yea, in the apostle's words to the repentant Corinthians, to "revenge" themselves on their own guilty souls, and, by a long course of penitence, to bring the whole soul and body into subjection to the will of God.

Some time has now passed since the events which we have recorded. Charles Lever still continues a sincere penitent, and a daily suppliant for pardon before the throne of grace; and nothing serves to calm and tranquillise his mind, and comfort and refresh his spirit, so much as the strict observance of all the ordinances of the Church. His father is now dead, having passed the last portion of his life in communion with the Church. His mother still lives; and in her he finds his greatest solace. Partly in memory of

the wrongs which he has inflicted, partly in penitence for his own sin, he has resolved to pass a life of celibacy; for though well aware that no atonement which he can offer will add to the all-sufficient merits of Christ our Saviour, yet he deems that, for one who has so deeply transgressed, a life of self-denial and mortification is most suitable. He looks with calm satisfaction, and without a particle of envy (though a sigh of regret may sometimes escape him), upon the young family which are growing up around the knees of his friend George Franklin, who is wedded happily. For himself, he has resolved to devote his days to God. Each morning, as the single church-bell rings, you may see him leading his widowed mother to the house of prayer. He is a regular attendant at the table of the Lord, and finds a holy consolation in the Church's alternate round of fast and festival. Each Sunday sees him a constant and able assistant to Mr. Morton in his school; and his labours in the parish, under the guidance of the worthy pastor, are invaluable. He has been especially useful to the vicar in promoting the institution of a Church-society or reading-club, conducted on sound principles, at which the young men of Laxington meet for the purposes of mutual information, instead of the Civil and Religious Liberty club. Though not rich, yet he devotes much money to the service of God. In short, he is resolved that if the example of his early years may have led many into sin, that of his maturer age may, by God's grace, be such as

to induce those who behold it to walk in the way of godliness. And though he has still many struggles to make against the tenacious power of sin, they are becoming daily less arduous and doubtful; and the power of Satan is gradually yielding to the grace of the Holy Spirit, which dwells within him.

A few words more will suffice to complete the facts of our narrative.

I am happy to say that Socialism has now become extinct at Laxington; its hall is deserted, its committee broken up, its contributions discontinued: and my friend the vicar has taken the most effectual means to prevent its re-appearance, by building a new church, which, with the old one, is sufficient for the population of the place; and by the appointment of a zealous clergyman, whose principles are similar to his own.

Together with Socialism, Dissent has very much lost ground; insomuch that there are great hopes that, by God's blessing on the steady pursuance of the same principles, Laxington may present the cheerful spectacle — alas! too rarely met with — of an united Christian community.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Conclusion.

Time was, though truth eterne I felt my creed,
That when men smiled, and said, "Thy words are strong,
But others think not thus; and dar'st thou plead
That thou art right, and all beside thee wrong?"—
I shrunk abash'd, nor dar'd the theme prolong.
Now, in that creed's most high and holy strain,
Led to revere the Church's solemn tone,
The calm, clear accents of the chosen one,
Christ's mystic bride, ordained with Him to reign,
I hear with pitying sigh such taunts profane;
Taught that my faith in hers is bas'd secure
On the unshaken rock that shall for aye endure.

Lyra Apostolica.

Such is a picture of the life of a man in the humbler classes who has fallen under the evil influences of the nineteenth century, but, through the mercy of God, has been "saved as it were by fire," and "plucked as a brand from the burning."

It is believed that the whole presents a portrait of real life without the least exaggeration. The dark side of the picture is too plain to be mistaken. God grant that the brighter portion of it may not be without its original.

It is, as it always has been, a contest between the Church and the world,—a struggle between the

sensual appetite, the headstrong will, the pride, the earthly tendencies of man, and the holy and revealed will of God. That which distinguishes the present times from others, and which is designed to be set forth in the foregoing chapters, is the peculiar form under which the evil assails us. A man's foes are those of his own household; his danger springs up from precisely the quarter where he was wont to seek for safety. Instead of inculcating lessons of obedience, his very parents too often bring him up in insubordination and contempt for authority. The magistrates, and those in office, to whom men of former generations were accustomed to look up with reverence, as bearing God's commission, now are often the loudest and most mischievous abettors of licentiousness and disorder. Rulers, instead of controlling the excesses of the multitude, appeal to the judgment and will of those whom God has appointed them to govern. Nay, religion itself has been desecrated to the same evil uses. In too many instances, those who are looked upon as religious teachers contribute directly to the same license and insubordination; and instead of upholding the unity of Christ's body, and inculcating respect for the authority of God's ordained servants, are the first to set the example of reckless defiance of God's Church, and bitter hostility against His ministers. And, strange to say, even amongst those who would be teachers of the Church, and guides of religious opinion within it, many are found whose aim, or at

least whose practice, it is to disparage the authority of their venerable mother, and unconsciously to confound her with the sects by which she is surrounded; thereby defacing in men's minds the distinction between right and wrong, obliterating the landmarks which God Himself has placed, and referring all things to the arbitration of an unguided private judgment.

Such are the influences which surround the man of the nineteenth century, and such is the self-willed licentious spirit of the age; in part attributable to the neglect of Church-principles which has sprung up in the Church itself; thence passing through the various phases of Liberalism, Dissent, Socialism, and Chartism, until the nation is all but one mass of corruption — "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."

Perilous indeed is the condition of both Church and state, unless vigorous measures be taken to improve it. If Socialism and Chartism have for the moment dwindled away, it is only to give birth to some new monster of a similar origin and nature. In fact, Socialism in its rampant state has been so far beneficial, that it has served to open men's eyes to the enormous moral corruption which exists: and though for a while it may seem to have sunk into obscurity, and serve only

"To point a moral, or adorn a tale;"

yet all the materials of Socialism still exist in many

places in their full strength and virulence. The deluded men, who no longer assemble at the halls of science, have not yet been taught to frequent the Church; they have not bent the knee to the living God; the plague-spot is driven in, only to appear again in a more pestilent form.

When people think on this dreadful state of things, which from time to time is forced upon their notice, they are wont to exclaim, with a mixed feeling of dread and aversion, against the fearful turbulence and immorality of the lower classes. They seldom consider that it is impossible that one class should have become so deeply corrupted without the gross negligence—nay, without the direct co-operation—of those above them. It is in the higher classes that we must trace the source; and it is there also, humanly speaking, that we must find the remedy of the evil.

The root of the mischief is an evil heart of unbelief, exhibiting itself in a manner peculiar to the age. It is not seen—at least amongst the upper classes—in a bold avowal of infidelity, nor in an eager prosecution of error; but rather in a disregard of truth, an indifference to truth or falsehood, a prostration of the soul to carnal pleasures and mere worldly business, engendering an utter carelessness as to the eternal distinction between right and wrong. You shall see many men in all classes—in the higher they are more conspicuous, but they abound equally in all—men who look with a supercilious eye of pity on

those few who are still zealous for the truth. If they regard the various opinions of men at all, it is not to discover which is in the right, but to wonder at their contentions. They affect to be spectators only, forgetting that they are themselves actors, who have a part to play; beings placed on the earth that they may live to the glory of God who made them, and be the instruments of spreading the knowledge of His truth; responsible creatures, who will one day have to give a strict account of all that has been committed to them. But, strange to say, they look calmly on, and either amuse themselves with the eagerness of others, or blame them for needlessly ruffling the calm surface of pleasurable enjoyment. They bless God that they are not bigots, forgetting that infidelity or scepticism is a far worse state of mind than bigotry. Admitting in words that revealed religion is true, they profess to care for neither Church nor sect; they forget that, if God has revealed any thing at all, *there must be one right way of receiving that revelation*, and that all other ways must of necessity be wrong. It is not that these men could not, if they chose, make up their minds as to what is truth; but from sheer indifference, they seem not to think it worth their while to take any trouble about it, either as regards themselves or others. A favourite expression with them is, that "religion is an affair between man and his Maker;" that it matters not to us what are a man's religious opinions. Churchman, Dissenter, Jew or

Mahometan, Infidel or Atheist, all are to be treated by us on the same equal terms. The pleasant intercourse of life is not to be disturbed, as these Gallios think, by foolish questions of mere names and words. Charity and good will — that is to say, an indifference to all religious truth — is the true maxim of the world. Thus they speak; and the result of their principles may be seen in the errors and confusion of a divided nation, and its unsettled government and laws.

It is not possible that this state of feeling should spread over our upper and middle classes, without infusing itself into our social and political relations, and interfering directly with the Church of God. Formerly politicians knew the Church's claim, and acknowledged her position; she was accounted, as in truth she is, the authorised instrument *of God* to teach the people: then, in evil days, came a change over men's minds, and the Church was esteemed the authorised agent of *the state*. This false notion prepared the way for that which now exists; and the Church has come to be considered by men of the world only as *one of many agents* to teach religion and morality; and our most influential statesmen seem labouring to adjust affairs to this new standard. Instead of adhering to the Church, and maintaining her cause with holy and affectionate zeal, as their divine instructress; instead of standing on the broad principle, that the Church is God's appointed instrument for the dissemination

of truth, and therefore to be reverently upheld for the sake of truth and charity,—they begin to look on her claims as unreasonable, and to consider her as a mere human institution, which may rise or fall according to the caprice of man. Thus are some of our best and ablest statesmen beguiled by the latitudinarian spirit of the age: they who should stand up as the instruments of God to maintain the truth, themselves yield to the popular current; and their pusillanimity and indifference to truth spreading itself over the mass of their admirers and adherents adds fearfully to the urgency of the evil.

That which is at the present time above all things necessary, is to endeavour to establish in men's minds a feeling that *truth is something real and discoverable.* We believe that God has given us a revelation from heaven (for I speak to the latitudinarian, not the infidel); we believe that God's word is truth. Well then, if God has given us a revelation of His will, it is absurd, surely, to suppose that there is no way of ascertaining the true sense of that revelation. The various sects and societies, opposed as they are to each other, cannot all be right; and those which are wrong are the adversaries of God's truth, and therefore to be avoided and discountenanced. Moreover, the truth demands, for its own sake, the support and adherence of understanding men; it demands that we should both live according to it and promulgate it. To disregard it, or to obscure it, or to refuse to aid in its propagation, is a sort of irreverence and

ingratitude towards God, of which men will surely have to give account.

To establish, therefore, in men's minds that truth is something real and discoverable, is a primary object. We may then go on to the declaration of God's word, that "THE CHURCH *is the pillar and ground of the* TRUTH;" from which declaration it would appear certain that *the Church also is something real and visible.* It cannot be an airy, invisible phantom, as some appear to think. If it be to stand as the basis and pillar of the truth, it must be itself also something tangible, visible, and ascertainable. The notion is nonsensical that there may be several opposing truths, all nevertheless equally true; and several "pillars of the truth," on the which contradictory systems are inscribed; and several "grounds" or foundations of truth, on which utterly discordant fabrics are raised. So long as men persist in so absurd a notion, as they now practically do, so long will the Gospel be hidden and obscured, and the features of God's Church be marred. But once let men recognise the fact that the truth is real, and based on a real foundation; then we have some principle to proceed on; then our own Church comes forth, and claims to be a true and pure branch of that one apostolic Church which was founded by Christ; she shews her lineal descent from the apostles; she appeals confidently to God's word, and to the testimony of antiquity, for the pureness of her doctrine and discipline; and de-

clares herself to be God's appointed instrument in the land for the maintenance of the truth amongst the people.

Our object, therefore, as God's ministers, or as moral writers, must be to urge men to embrace the proposition, that *it is their bounden duty to make up their minds what is truth, and straightway to act on it in every department of life.*

Parents we entreat, as they desire the soul's health of their children, to educate them in that which they believe to be the real truth. We warn them of the irreparable mischief which they are inflicting on their children, if they bring them up in vague, indefinite notions, or in the want of fixed principle, and reverence for holy things. We exhort them, therefore, not to be satisfied with mere worldly information, but to take heed that their children learn the truth as God has revealed it, and as His Church upholds it.

Magistrates, and those who are in authority, we remind of their bounden duty to "maintain the truth;" to give their influence and their countenance to that which they conscientiously believe to be the truth, and to that only.

Statesmen also, and *rulers*, we call on to make up their minds what is truth, and to uphold and cherish it; not to rest satisfied with the absurd and flippant assertion, that men have different opinions, and we have no right to interfere with them. We do not ask them to interfere with any man's opinion

—far from it; let every man have full permission from the state to exercise his own discretion in matters of faith. To God he must give account, not to man. But amongst the multitude of conflicting creeds, all of which, except one, must of necessity, by the force of terms, be more or less false, let statesmen fix on that which they conscientiously believe to be true, and let them cherish and support it, and endeavour to spread its blessings amongst the people. "If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him:" but do not raise one tabernacle for Baal, and another for God; which were to treat both with equal irreverence.

We would especially warn those who, from thoughtlessness, or early association, have embraced *liberal* sentiments, of the awful position in which those opinions place them. We are far from saying that liberal opinions are incompatible with a regard for God's true religion—(and yet it would be well for such men to consider the matter on their knees before God, and earnestly pray for enlightenment). But we would beg the holders of such notions to consider the course in which their opinions are even now of necessity leading them. They are encouraging a press which taints the very air with its impurity, spreading among the people the most openly blasphemous and flagitious doctrines; or, when it speaks more moderately, even then encouraging in men's minds doubts or indifference as to the most solemn subjects, and irreverence with regard to the

most sacred things; thus undermining the faith of many poor uninstructed men, raising in their minds unworthy suspicions of those ministers whom God has sent to gather them into His fold, and so destroying many souls for whom Christ hath died. For all this, the liberal politician, of whatsoever station, is more or less responsible. Then let him consider the mischief which he is scattering about, by his loose and careless mode of speaking, to the multitudes. The Church bids the people "behave lowly and reverently to their betters;" then comes the demagogue, and tells them that their betters are tyrants and oppressors, or fools and drivellers. God's word bids the people submit themselves to their spiritual pastors; the demagogue holds them up to ridicule and opprobrium. The Bible teaches men to be humble-minded; the demagogue puffs them up with vain notions of their enlightenment and manifold virtues. The Bible teaches them to perform their various duties; the demagogue bids them clamour for their rights and privileges — thus scattering firebrands amongst the most inflammable matter, and sowing seeds amongst an ignorant population, which may be the cause of countless evils here, and to many of them an eternity of misery hereafter. There is yet another serious charge against the liberals — namely, that by their votes, and speeches, and writings, they directly prevent the communication of the will of God to the people. Their false theory obliges them to join with the Infidel and the Dissenter, in

refusing to allow the government of the country to build churches and appoint religious teachers, for want of which hundreds of thickly peopled communities are dwelling in heathen darkness.

Such are the modes in which many liberals in the present day are deluding the minds, and, it is to be feared, destroying the souls of their fellow-men; themselves, it may be, utterly unconscious of the evils which they are causing; supposing themselves at perfect liberty to adopt whatsoever course of politics they choose, and to promote their objects by all the means in their power, without any reference to the effect which they may have on the cause of truth and virtue, or the souls of their fellow-men.

Nay, even those from whom we might expect better things—those to whom we might look to stem the torrent, are too often more inclined to yield to it, and adapt themselves to the circumstances of the times, than strive to direct and amend them.

O that such men would act on principles of *right* instead of *expediency*; that they would look to God and His eternal truth, as the object and aim of all their actions!

Men know not the power of truth, or they would not thus despise it; they know not the hereditary faith which yet pervades the people; they know not the instinctive feeling of conscience which God has implanted, and which still exists in the breast of each individual, even though the understanding has been

deceived and perverted. The truths we learn upon a mother's knee, ere yet the evil intercourse of the world has tainted us; the influence of parental authority, which is yet sacred, though abused; the power of old associations still rooted in the nation's mind; but, above all, the vantage-ground which the Church yet occupies—the venerable edifice in each parish consecrated to God; the ordained minister bearing God's commission; the inherent vitality of the Church herself, her pure and scriptural doctrine; the eternal promise of God, to maintain her to the end of time;—all these form a basis, on which might yet be constructed a tower of safety; these are so many countervailing tendencies, which a master-mind might yet employ to promote the cause of truth. Will God yet permit some master-mind to save us? or is the flood of ungodliness so mighty that no individual can hope to stem it? Then it behoves us *all* to be the more zealous and active, in our several stations and departments: as members of the one true Church universal, we must labour in the sacred cause, as if all depended on our exertion. Then the eternal principles of truth, which men of expediency now scoff at as antiquated dreams, might, in spite of their desertion, nay, in some degree in consequence of it, again gather strength, and mould the hearts of our people; and the Church, thus thrown on her own resources, would stand in a more commanding and influential position, and present a firmer barrier against sin and error, than when she

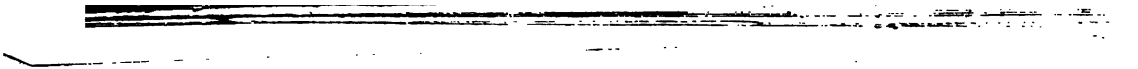
forgot her divine authority, and too much trusted to the arm of human power.

Our present work must be the restoration of the Church to be the *instructor*, the *educator*, and *spiritual guide* of the nation. Much has already been done, and is still in progress; but it is not the mere building churches, and appointing preachers, who shall stand up in God's name to teach the people; but it is the restoration of the Church's spirit and holy influence, at which we must aim. We should teach men what the Church really is—namely, the instrument which God hath appointed to evangelise the world; yea, the body, of which Christ Himself is the head. We should scrupulously restore whatsoever holy rite or ceremony has fallen into disuse through lapse of years. We should build our churches as our fathers built them, with a beauty fit for the dwelling-place of the Most High, and a solidity which might shew they are intended for our children after us, for many generations. We should proclaim aloud the respective duties of God's ministers and people, and denounce in strongest terms, and in the spirit of St. Paul, the grievous sin of those who separate from the apostolic fellowship. We should adopt, in its full extent, the principle furnished to us by the Socialist,—that by early training and association, you may model the young mind, and lead it in the paths of truth and virtue. But, unlike the Socialist, we should go to the living word of God for instruction, and not to the shifting sands

of human caprice. We should recognise as truth, not what vain men conjecture, but what God has taught.

In all these ways, and a thousand others, should the returning spirit of truth and unity be encouraged and set forth. We should consider nothing too arduous to be attempted, nothing so trivial as to be disregarded. Then let us not despair of an eventual triumph. God has promised to be with His Church even to the end of the world. Let us look at her past history for a confirmation of this promise, and a warrant for our hope. Time was, when half the world was overshadowed by the baleful cloud of Arianism; Pelagianism spread its noxious branches over many of the Church's fairest territories; but both have perished and passed away. Here, in our own land, the Romish superstition once spread like the deadly upas-tree; but that too was rooted up. Why then should we think that the sects which now spread themselves over our land, and mar the fair proportion of the Church, should remain amongst us as fixtures for ever? Why should statesmen and politicians act on this most improbable hypothesis, and endeavour to adjust their policy to a state of things which all history and all analogy teach us will endure but for a short time? Why not rather believe that, like Arianism, and Pelagianism, and Popery, and the host of other heresies, which have sprung up and flourished, and then passed away, so the various discordant sects and schisms which now

vex the land will again merge for ever in the great stream of the Church catholic and universal? Only let us preach, and pray, and act, and write, with this hope, and we may yet live to see the day of its accomplishment.



APPENDIX.

In the eighteenth chapter allusion is made to a crime recently committed at Ashton-under-Lyne; which, however, is far from being the only one of a similar nature perpetrated within the last few years.

While this volume has been passing through the press, circumstances have transpired with regard to this murder, of so striking and fearful a nature, that I conceive it will be conducive to my design,—namely, of illustrating general views of society by facts,—if I detail briefly the particulars which have already come to light.[1]

In October last a strike occurred amongst the sawyers at Ashton-under-Lyne. Their employers, it seems, found it necessary, on account of a depression in the trade, to reduce their wages to the same scale as those of workmen employed in the same labour at Manchester; and on their announcing their intention, the men refused to continue at their work.

Speaking generally, workmen have a perfect right to bargain with their employers for the wages of their labour, though, of course, if workmen demand more than is reasonable, or masters persist in offering less than is reasonable, the unreasonable party is morally wrong. Christians ought to be just and liberal to each other. Even their temporal interests will soon enable them to come to terms, if they act with tolerable moderation. But neither party

[1] The facts detailed have been gathered from various notices in the *Times* newspaper.

can be justified in using violence or unlawful means to accomplish their object, even supposing it to be just.

In the present instance, some of the masters being deserted by their regular workmen, engaged others in their places. These men judged the demands of their brother-workmen to be unreasonable, and the wages offered to be fair, otherwise they would not have engaged themselves; and surely, in a free country, men have a perfect right to work for what wages they choose. The turn-outs, however, determined to prevent the others from exercising this just right. They assembled in crowds before the houses of the employers, and paraded the streets, using intimidating and abusive language to the new workmen. They endeavoured also to terrify the men's wives, declaring, that they would knock their husbands' brains out; and in one instance they shewed a poor woman a sack, telling her that it was to put her husband's body in.

About a fortnight after the strike, as four of the new workmen were returning home, they were waylaid and attacked by a number of ruffians, and one of them, named Garland, was beaten to death. Strange to say, this outrage produced but little sensation, and no reward was offered by Government for the apprehension of the murderers, which, as many were implicated, would, in all probability, have led to their detection.

On the 20th of October, a hole was made in the door of the house of one of the employers, and several pounds of gunpowder were poured into it through a funnel, evidently with the intention of blowing up the house; but the villains were interrupted by the watchman, who gave an alarm; and for this act of duty he was dreadfully beaten by three men with blackened faces.

Some while afterwards, a gun, loaded with small shot, was fired at the place where two of the new workmen

were usually employed; and had not it chanced that both of them were at the time at the bottom of the pit, the top-sawyer must inevitably have been killed.

It was on the 11th of December that the most dreadful deed was perpetrated. Two workmen, Benjamin and James Cooper, were engaged, soon after dusk, in their occupation in the yard, in the very heart of the town. Benjamin was at the top, and had a candle fixed on his leg, in order that he might see the line marked on the wood. As they were thus employed, a tremendous explosion was heard, which alarmed the whole neighbourhood, and it was found that a murderous engine, loaded with slugs, which is described as a piece of iron piping, plugged at one end with lead, and having a touchhole filed into it, so as to resemble a cannon, had been fired through the crevices of the shed in which the men were employed. Four slugs entered the body of Benjamin Cooper. The poor man being carried by his brother to his lodgings, lingered for two hours in great agony, and then expired, calling on God to provide for his widowed wife and family.

This second murder at length roused the indignation and activity of the local authorities. It is unfair to judge of the conduct of public men without being aware of all the circumstances under which they acted. We ought, therefore, to suppose that, in the case of the first outrage, they were not in possession of sufficient information to warrant them in taking a more decided course. Upon the second murder, however, a reward of 100*l.* was offered by the Government, and a similar sum by the master-builders, for the apprehension of the offenders. The police were instructed to search the house where the united workmen were known to resort; in consequence of which a number of papers and documents were found in the club-house and upon the person of the secretary, which led to the de-

tection of a wide-extended conspiracy, not only at Ashton, but in other principal places of the United Kingdom; and facts were elicited which warranted the apprehension of nineteen individuals, in different places. As these men have not yet been brought to trial, it is premature to pronounce as to their guilt with regard to the murders, or even of their participation in the conspiracy. But of the facts deposed by witnesses, and publicly known, respecting the conspiracy itself, we may freely speak.

The Sawyers' Union extends, as it appears, throughout many of the populous towns in England and Ireland; and some of its proceedings are of a most atrocious description. The admission into the Union is accompanied by illegal and dreadful oaths, and various ceremonies of a secret character, calculated to convey terror to the mind. The new member is blindfolded before he is taken to the house where the oath is to be administered, and then turned round several times, and led, by various circuitous paths, to the place. He is ushered into a darkened room, where there are men habited in white gowns, their faces concealed by masks and beards. A hymn is sung or chanted by the assembly, in which the most dreadful menaces are uttered against all who shall offend against the rules, or oppose the measures of the Union. He is then required, in a solemn manner, with a drawn sword at his naked breast, to place his hand on the Bible and the New Testament, and swear, with a fearful oath, not to divulge the secrets of the society. After the oath is taken, he sees suddenly before him a skeleton, illuminated by a flickering light, and a voice is heard to utter the following words:—

"Here are the eyes that have ceased to glare,
Here is the bosom that has ceased to beat;
Here is death's emblem—so beware
Of treachery, or view thy fate."

After the conclusion of these horrible and blasphemous rites, the new member is again blindfolded, and led to his home by his former conductors, in the same circuitous manner. From that time he is no longer a freeman. He is bound to obey the laws of this arbitrary association, as if he were their slave. He may not work for whom he chooses, nor for the wages with which he is satisfied. If an order is issued by the leader of the Union, he is bound to discontinue his work, even though his family must starve. Nay, he is subjected to a thraldom which imposes on him the most dreadful acts, and from which he cannot escape. It is stated, that when any workman has contravened the laws of the society, and his death is decreed, the various members of the Union are required to draw lots, and he on whom the lot falls is bound, under the penalty of a similar fate, to murder the victim. Let us earnestly hope that this last statement may not be the exact truth, as it would implicate a fearful number of Englishmen in the moral guilt of murder. It seems, on the whole, more probable that crimes like these are plotted by a small knot of leaders, and that they are generally committed by strangers hired for the purpose. Such is believed to have been the agency through which the last diabolical murder was committed.

Surely it is time that the attention of the nation should be forcibly directed to this most atrocious system. If a nobleman is murdered by his valet, the crime is in every body's mouth; ample rewards are offered; every exertion is made, until the murderer is brought to justice. But when a poor workman is beaten to death by his fellows, the crime is scarcely heeded; and even a second murder, committed in a most atrocious manner, probably by the same conspirators, fails to excite any great feeling of horror, except in the immediate neighbourhood, and amongst

those whom it principally concerns. The truth is—and a most lamentable truth it is—that *we are becoming accustomed to deeds of blood and outrage.* The columns of the public journals are so full of such events, that we pass them over almost unnoticed; and it is only when some outrage occurs which alarms the upper classes of society for their safety, that a just feeling of indignation is excited.

In adding these details to my volume, it is not my object to paint in stronger colours than necessary the criminality of the humbler classes. Most deeply ought we to pity and feel for them. But I earnestly wish, so far as my humble efforts can avail, to impress on the minds of those who read these pages, that such events are the concern—nay, in some degree the fault—of us all. *They are the crimes of a neglected population.* We want to be roused to the feeling that God has given us the means, through His Scripture and His Church, of working the moral renovation of the people; and that so long as we neglect to use them, the blame and the danger rest upon our own heads. We are all mixed up in one great nation, "and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

THE END.

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